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COMMONWEA

A Review of Religion, Politics, and Culture

March 26,

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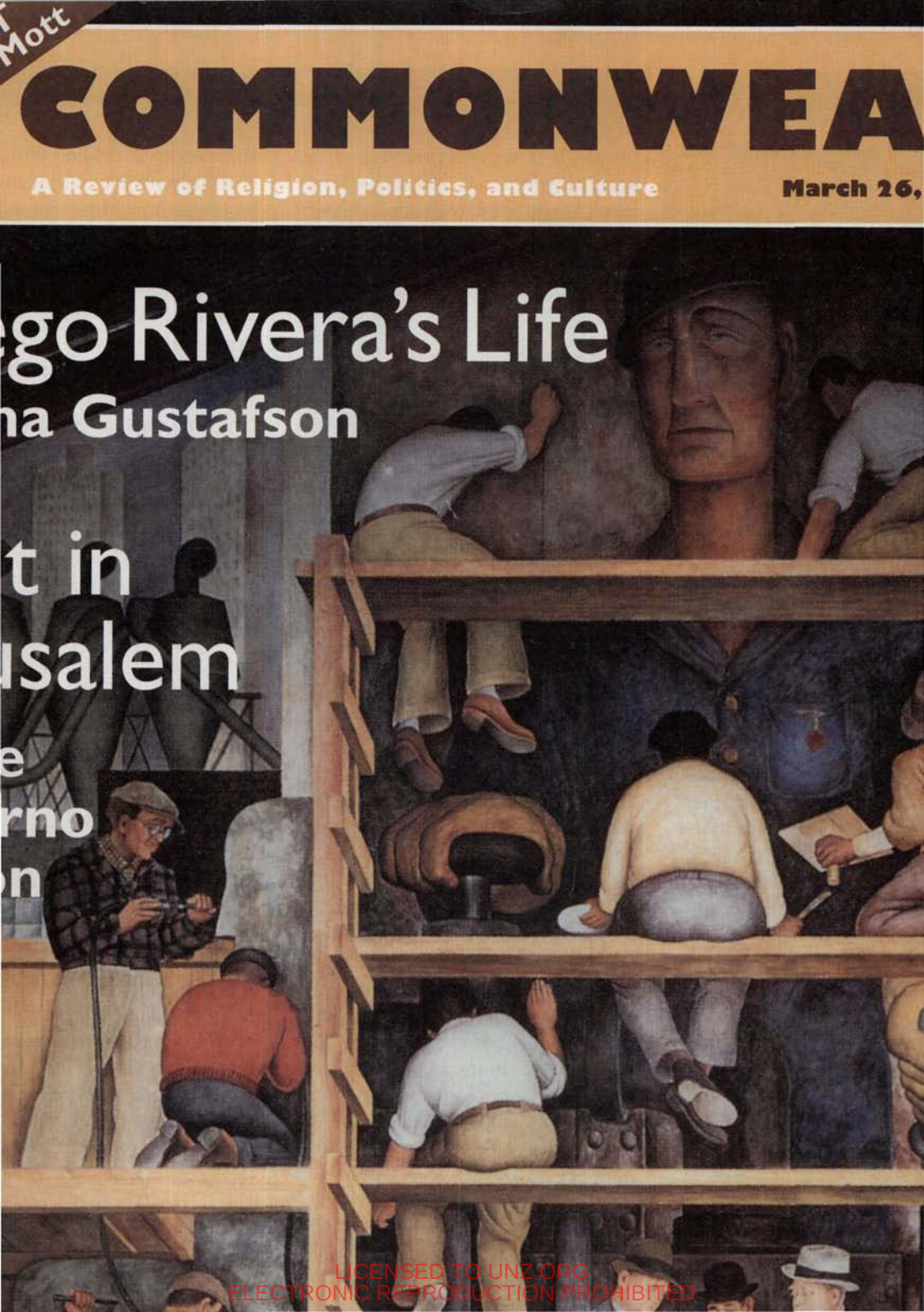

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To the Editors

Thanks, Frank!

I am grateful to *Commonweal* and to Paul Baumann for the obituary of Frank McConnell [February 12], a writer who touched an extraordinary range of subjects and people. Among Frank's works is an edited volume, to which he himself makes a brilliant contribution, titled *The Bible and the Narrative Tradition* (University of California Press). The quality of his attention at the border between conventional biblical studies and conventional literary studies prompted me, as a total stranger, to write and ask him if he would read early chapters of the work I eventually published as *God: A Biography*. I had begun this writing in great hesitation. He responded to what I sent with great enthusiasm, enthusiasm that kept me going when I might have stopped. Frank was a man of enormous sympathy, taking that word to combine understanding and generosity. He will be missed by many.

JACK MILES
Pasadena, Calif.

Truth comes out of the closet

Anthony Andreassi's "Better Late Than..." [Last Word, February 26] was one of the better commentaries on the subject I've come across in many years. In our little Orthodox jurisdiction, we are home to a number of folks in the gay/lesbian community (though we are not, heaven forbid, a "gay church" or any other kind of single-issue gathering). That old truism about evil conquering when good people do nothing is precisely at the heart of Andreassi's reflection. I hear many versions of Andreassi's experience, and I bless him for bringing the real issues out of the closet.

(BISHOP) E. BRIAN CARSTEN
Angola, Ind.

Correction ■ In the February 26 issue, Lyn C. Isbell generously shared her insights on charitable giving. Inflicting a Lenten penance of our own, however, we misspelled her name. Our apologies and regrets. THE EDITORS

Web weaving

What a handsomely bangled web you weave [www.commonwealmagazine.org]. When first I practice to retrieve—it works. I found the article I was looking for quickly and easily. Congratulations and thanks.

A.E.P. WALL
Orlando, Fla.

Ducking the issue

It is unclear whether Peter Feuerhard ["The Voucher Canard," February 12] is worried about all students from disadvantaged families or only those smart enough to compete for those very exclusive state schools that he so admires. What distinguishes religious schools in our ghettoes from these fancy government enclaves is their surprising ability to educate children who are not so smart. All the evidence—from Jim Coleman to Tony Bryk to Jay Green—tells us that the best place for the unremarkable lower-class child is an inner-city religious school chosen by parents. The way to create more such opportunities is to help poor parents pay their modest tuition. That is the basic point of the school-reform movement. Feuerhard says it looks, walks, and talks like a canard, but I fear it is he who delivers a duck.

JOHN E. COONS
Berkley, Calif.

The writer is professor of law, emeritus, at Boalt Hall, University of California, Berkeley, and the author of Private Wealth and Public Education *(Books on Demand).*

Full opportunity

Peter Feuerherd's contribution to the Last Word column makes me think of the Ronald Reaganism, "There you go again." Feuerherd confuses one of the means (vouchers) with the basic end (responsible parent choice). We just fought our first losing battle in Virginia to achieve parent choice through tuition tax credits necessitated by the fact that our commonwealth has a constitutional amendment that bans state funds from flowing to the religious sector.

The government needs to acknowledge and facilitate the basic rights of parents to choose where they feel their children will have the best chance of developing educationally, socially, psychologically, civically, etc. There is also a basic issue of justice—why should parents who want their children in religious or private schools, not the government one "assigned" to them by reason of residence, have to endure the fiscal penalty of fully supporting a government school?

In the long run, the parent-choice-in-education movement is about full opportunity: the full opportunity for each child to have the schooling best suited for him/her; the full opportunity for parents to make informed choice; and the full opportunity for private and religious schools (most of which have clearly demonstrated their ability to achieve more for students with less resources) to compete for the educational dollar. It's a matter of justice and equity, and clearly taught in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (n. 2229).

WILLIAM J. TOBIN
Falls Church, Va.

School choice

In his article concerning school vouchers ["Some Testing, Please," January 15] Edward M. Gaffney, Jr., decries the Supreme Court's historic condemnation of the use of government funds to subsidize religious schools. He is pleased that the Court refused to review last year's ruling of the Wisconsin Supreme Court which upheld the constitutionality of vouchers for sectarian schools. He gleefully exclaims,

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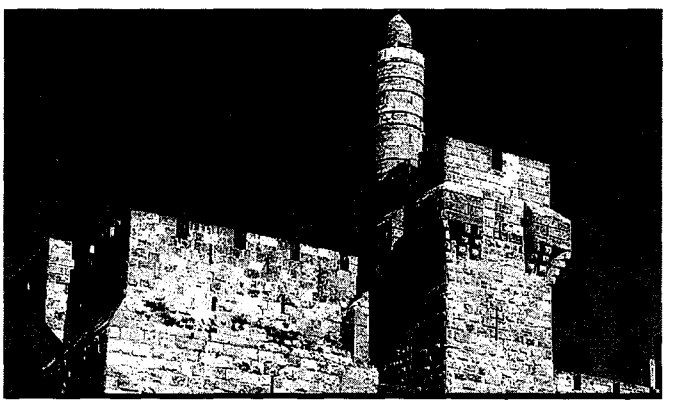

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"this debate will now have to be informed more by facts than by predilictions fueled by passions about the separation of church and state."

Gaffney is too quick to condemn a principle that has benefited both church and state for more than two hundred years. To the contrary, lovers of liberty have never apologized for being passionate about the separation of church and state—from Baptist Roger Williams to Catholic John F. Kennedy.

Gaffney goes on to applaud the use of a state such as Wisconsin as a "laboratory" in which we may test the worth of vouchers in order to provide empirical evidence on which we can then base future arguments. He should understand that the Bill of Rights is not something to be tinkered with by some legal mad scientist. The forthright language of the First Amendment (Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion) makes clear that this fundamental freedom was never intended to be subjected to experimentation. We would do well to remember the wise admonition of the father of our Constitution, James Madison. Far from encouraging experimentation, Madison warned us "to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties."

We at the Baptist Joint Committee heed Madison's warning and take alarm at any proposal that would funnel taxpayer dollars to private and religious schools. Thomas Jefferson called it "sinful and tyrannical"; we do too.

J. BRENT WALKER
Washington, D.C.

The writer is general counsel to the Baptist Joint Committee.

The author replies:

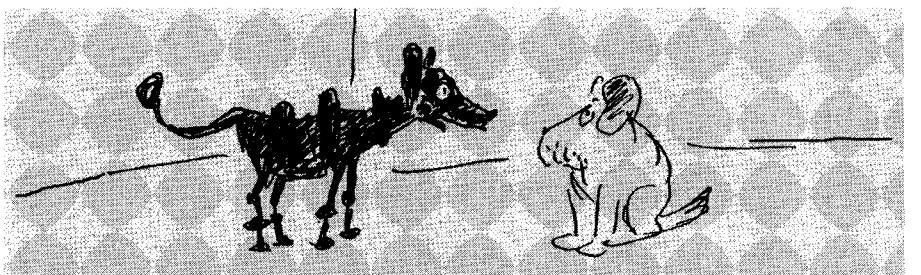
I applaud the result in the Milwaukee case, but most emphatically *not* because, as Walker fears, I am "quick to condemn a principle that has benefitted both church and state for more than two hundred years." On the contrary, I am in profound agreement that the First Amendment prohibits the federal government from establishing a religion or inhibiting the free exercise of religion. We also agree that the state constitutions and the Fourteenth Amendment prohibit the states from establishing a state religion or inhibiting the free exercise of religion by state laws.

Walker and I disagree over the application of the general principle of nonestablishment and free exercise to the specific matter of how best to fund the general education of all children, a matter that the First Congress never contemplated because the government didn't operate schools then. The reason I applaud the result in the Wisconsin decision is that it is more principled than the scatter-patter of decisions in the U.S. Supreme Court since 1947, when the Court began to focus on the education of children in religious schools.

The Court's tortured results are not reasoning; they are irrational. *Aguilar* (1985) held that little children in Harlem could not be taught to read or to count by public school teachers inside a religious school, but could do so in trailers parked outside. Thomas Jefferson never said that reversing such a foolish decision as *Aguilar* would be "sinful or tyrannical," and Madison's famous "Memorial and Remonstrance" was aimed at the teaching of Christian religion, not at impartial remedial reading and math.

Are we searching for a genuine principle of constitutional law here? Justice Sandra Day O'Connor articulated a clear one when she wrote in *Agostini*, the case that reversed *Aguilar* in 1997, that there is no impermissible financial incentive to advance religion when "aid is allocated on the basis of neutral, secular criteria that neither favor nor disfavor religion, and is made available to both religious and secular beneficiaries on a nondiscriminatory basis." If we learned to live harmoniously with this principle, we would not view state legislators and governors as "mad scientists" when they conduct experiments in funding mechanisms that remain within the nondiscriminatory principle.

EDWARD MCGLYNN GAFFNEY, JR.



"Perhaps I'm not making myself understood, French being a vowel language."

Assessing schools

Schools are not very different than they once were, except that they now also try to educate children formerly pushed out, dropped out, or refused in. There was not a time, long ago or not so long ago, when, as Abigail McCarthy claims "a high school diploma was a school's assurance that its graduates were prepared to enter college or to join the work force" ["Better Schools," January 29]. Lots of eighteen-year-olds neither went to college nor were prepared for jobs that required knowing the Constitution. All the diploma ever meant was that you had completed, in some fashion or other, four years worth of Carnegie credits. No state in the whole union used to require a test to graduate, so they couldn't have had "significant test scores."

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Superior people

Advertising is the *lingua franca* of the modern age. Everyone has something to sell or something they want to buy, and advertising is what brings sellers and buyers together. Guaranteeing the quality of the merchandise is a routine advertising technique. Take the venerable Charleston, South Carolina, wholesalers Austin, Laurens, & Appleby. They had a boatload of highly valuable merchandise ready for a competitive consumer market. Assuaging prospective customers' concerns about any hidden defects in their inventory was important. "To be sold on board the ship *Bance Island*, on Tuesday the 6th of May next, at Ashley Ferry; a choice cargo of about 150 fine healthy NEGROES, just arrived from the Windward & Rice Coast," reads the firm's eighteenth-century ad. "The utmost care has already been taken, and shall be continued, to keep them free from the least danger of being infected with the SMALL POX, no boat having been on board, and all other communication with people from Charles-Town prevented."

Selling human flesh is an ancient practice, and one that seems to find a new manifestation in every age. It's not impossible to imagine an Austin, Laurens & Appleby-like advertisement appearing somewhere on the Web, or perhaps in a student newspaper at a prestigious university.

The *New York Times* recently reported that the following ad—illustrated with drawings of a baby carriage and a stork delivery—has been appearing in select college newspapers across the country: EGG DONOR NEEDED / LARGE FINANCIAL INCENTIVE / INTELLIGENT, ATHLETIC EGG DONOR NEEDED / FOR LOVING FAMILY / YOU MUST BE AT LEAST 5'10" / HAVE A 1400+ SAT SCORE / POSSESS NO MAJOR FAMILY MEDICAL ISSUES / $50,000 / FREE MEDICAL SCREENING / ALL EXPENSES PAID.

What, no blonde hair, blue eyes, and pure Aryan bloodline required? If this pitch for a eugenically "superior" donor is any indication, American culture seems to have made as little progress over the last 250 years in securing the intrinsic dignity of human life as it has in elevating the quality of advertising copy. For when it comes to the commercialization of human reproduction and the marketing of human eggs, we are fast returning to a world where persons carry a price tag, and where the cash value of some persons (or at least of their genetic "endowment") is far greater than that of others. Still, it is hard to believe that campus newspapers, otherwise notoriously sensitive about economic and social injustice, as well as the exploitation of women and minorities, would see fit to run such ads. Egg donation, after all, entails both present and possible future medical risk, not to mention that donors are selling their own genetic progeny to the highest bidder. Are nineteen-year-olds able to make truly informed decisions about such things? Is consent voluntary or subtly coerced when such large sums of money are involved?

The response to the ad has been robust—after all, $50,000 will pay almost two years' tuition at an Ivy League school. Of course, there is an aspect of absurdity in the idea of screening a genetic reproductive partner on the basis of SAT scores and height. One can imagine a whole new SAT coaching industry springing up to help dolts with a meager 1350 SAT qualify for egg donation. Athletic coaches will

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be swamped with requests from the egg-bearing but uncoordinated. Or think about the potential for graft and corruption in the business of certifying that candidates have "no major medical issues." And won't a few vertically challenged prospective donors, stunted at a mere 5'9", devise clever ways to add an extra inch? Already it appears that students at less prestigious state colleges and universities are demanding equal opportunity in the egg race. Will today's egg procurers, following in the entrepreneurial footsteps of Austin, Laurens & Appleby, let boatloads of such "fine, healthy" specimens go to waste?

A year ago on this page ("Eggs for Sale," March 27, 1998), we noted the moral dangers and the threat to human dignity signaled by the escalation of fees for donor eggs. At that time, Saint Barnabas Medical Center in New Jersey had made headlines by upping its fee to $5,000. That looks like chump change now. There is little surprising in the most recent tenfold increase in what people are willing to pay to gain a genetic advantage—some of it real, some of it illusory—for their children. The logic of the marketplace is inexorable. If left unregulated by the medical profession or by the state, the business of reproductive technology will become little more than a tool of the wealthy and an increasing rebuke to those who forswear such opportunities for eugenic "improvement." In the widespread practice of aborting Down's syndrome and other "defective" fetuses, American society is already establishing a dangerous pattern for its genetic future. These private "choices" implicitly fuel resentment against those who "unnecessarily" bring handicapped children into the world, not to mention against the handicapped themselves and their "cost" to society. And as the $50,000 egg ad exemplifies, it is but a small step in logic from aborting for physical or mental handicaps to selecting or engineering for intelligence, height, athletic ability, or other "desirable" qualities. Bryan Appleyard writes in his important new book *Brave New Worlds: Staying Human in the Genetic Future* (Viking), the "key problem with privatized eugenics [is that] it amounts to a judgment on the existing human population." Appleyard warns that the more control technology gives us over procreation and genetics—and it will give us increasing control over attributes such as sex, intelligence, and physical size—the easier it becomes to "generate new classes of human inferiority."

Advocates for untrammeled "reproductive freedom" argue that genetic information and the spread of private eugenic practices will not threaten the dignity of those who may be regarded as mentally or physically "inferior." That judgment seems naive at best, if not disingenuous. We are just beginning to feel the subtly corrosive effects that eugenic abortion and genetic screening have on our ideas about the value of children and human life, the meaning of sex and procreation, and the nature of the family. Yet already our children need only open their college newspapers to see how the new classes of human superiority and inferiority are taking shape.

OF SEVERAL MINDS

E.J. DIONNE, Jr.

POLITICS & RELIGION

Conservatives sound retreat

It's hard to notice historic turnings at the moment they happen. But sometimes the signs of the times appear in bold neon letters. That's the way to look at conservative leader Paul Weyrich's recent declaration that "politics has failed" and that moral conservatives should "separate ourselves from this hostile culture" and engage in "some sort of quarantine."

Weyrich made his position public in an open letter to his supporters last month and elaborated on it in an opinion piece in the *Washington Post* (March 7). Weyrich is so gloomy about our national culture ("I think we are caught up in a cultural collapse of historic proportions, a collapse so great that it simply overwhelms politics," he writes in his letter) that it may be tempting to write him off as a cranky doom-salesman nearing the end of his political career.

But that would be a mistake because Weyrich's new antipolitical posture has historical precedent. What Weyrich is proposing is the same form of political withdrawal that conservative evangelical Christians engaged in after their defeats in the 1920s. These included the failure of Prohibition and the Scopes trial on the teaching of evolution. During the Scopes battle, fundamentalist ideas were held up to national scorn. "Protestantism is down with a wasting disease," H.L. Mencken, one of the scorners, wrote at the time.

Withdrawing from politics did not mean that the fundamentalists and evangelicals went away. On the contrary, they built their own vibrant counterculture in the churches, on the radio, in books and magazines, and in local communities. When the evangelist Billy Graham brought the old religion to broad public attention again in the 1950s, he did not so much light a fire as reveal the power of a blaze that had long been burning.

But Graham's religion was public without being overtly political. So when Weyrich, the Rev. Jerry Falwell, and their allies led conservative evangelicals back into politics in the 1970s and early 1980s—largely in response to court decisions on issues such as abortion and school prayer—they were breaking with a four-decade-long pattern. What Weyrich suggests now is that cultural conservatives revert to

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their pre-Moral Majority strategy—"bypassing the institutions that are controlled by the enemy."

If Weyrich's forebears traced their defeat to Prohibition and the Scopes trial, he roots his current disillusionment in the failure to remove President Bill Clinton. "If there really were a moral majority out there," he mourned, "Bill Clinton would have been driven out of office months ago."

In his *Washington Post* article, Weyrich was careful to insist that he is not proposing a complete disengagement from politics. "What we are changing is what we expect from politics and, therefore, what we put into it," he writes. "The object is to prevent government from taking certain actions, actions designed to destroy freedom and impose ideology."

Here, too, there is a parallel to the post-1920s era: Evangelicals and fundamentalists continued to vote and exert influence, especially locally. But they didn't form political pressure groups such as the Moral Majority or the Christian Coalition. In fact, Weyrich and his allies are misreading the result of the Clinton battle. Most Americans who opposed removing Clinton from office did so not because they approved of his behavior—overwhelmingly, they disapproved—but because they saw the national cost of throwing him out as too high and preferred a lesser punishment.

At the same time, virtually every poll and social indicator shows Americans moving toward moderation if not conservatism on a range of moral issues. Where Weyrich sees cultural collapse and the dominance of "an alien ideology," most Americans continue to hold rather old-fashioned notions of right and wrong, family life and child rearing.

Still, there is much to be said for Weyrich's new approach to politics insofar as it could contribute to a disentangling of religion from partisan political conflict. Religion should have a public voice and religious people should not be marginalized. But to the extent that Weyrich and some of his allies tied faith to the success of one party and one ideological movement, they reduced rather than increased the reach of religion's voice. And they were necessarily disappointed when politicians who claimed to be their allies proved less pure and more accommodating once they were elected. That is the nature of politics in a pluralist democracy.

If Weyrich's new strategy makes religious conservatives less an interest group and more a leaven in our national life, he may discover that the culture is less hostile to their values than he thinks. □

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OF SEVERAL MINDS

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

SUCCESSFUL WOMEN

How to educate the world

Perhaps no institutions better illustrate the interweaving of change, continuity, and renewed vision in the Catholic world than do the Neylan institutions—the colleges and universities founded by women religious. There are 118 such colleges in this country. (Originally they were all women's colleges. Today only 25 still are.) Since 1978, they have been united through the Neylan Commission, an alliance named for two sisters, Edith and Genevieve Neylan, who, enthusiastic about their own education, established a trust to support the work of the colleges thus founded. In *Educating the Majority* (Macmillan, 1989), Patricia Roberts Harris, former secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, called Catholic women's colleges—the Neylan colleges—"a luminous minority." What made them so outstanding?

First, as women's colleges originally, they shared the strengths of women's colleges in general: Their graduates achieved success at a higher ratio than women graduates of coeducational institutions, more often pursued fields like mathematics and the sciences, and were more likely to be self-confident and have higher aspirations. What distinguished them from other women's colleges and burnished their achievements, however, was that most of them educated a different segment of the population and were, as sociologist David Riesman has pointed out, successful in lifting the students who came to them from one educational place to another, thus promoting their students' social mobility. And because they dealt with students who might well have to earn a living, they differed from other colleges in emphasizing occupational and professional preparation as well as an education in the liberal arts.

Their founders, determined that their students would equal those in secular institutions, led the way for Catholic colleges in breaking out of cultural isolation. They sought accreditation in state, regional, and national agencies, and were represented in national education associations and in professional associations. And they saw to it that their students were eligible for the most prestigious of honor societies. Now that the overwhelming majority of Neylan colleges are coeducational, it is not clear that their women graduates still benefit in the way they formerly did. But it is very likely.

Educating the Majority found that "more and more male students are attending women's colleges as part-time students in special courses, as exchange students in consortia, or as graduate students. In addition to seeing women in administration and faculty leadership positions, they see women students as campus leaders and experience the more healthy give-and-take in classes where women are on an equal basis with men." In the same book, Notre Dame sociologist Robert Hassenger found that women at these colleges were generally more intellectual and more socially concerned

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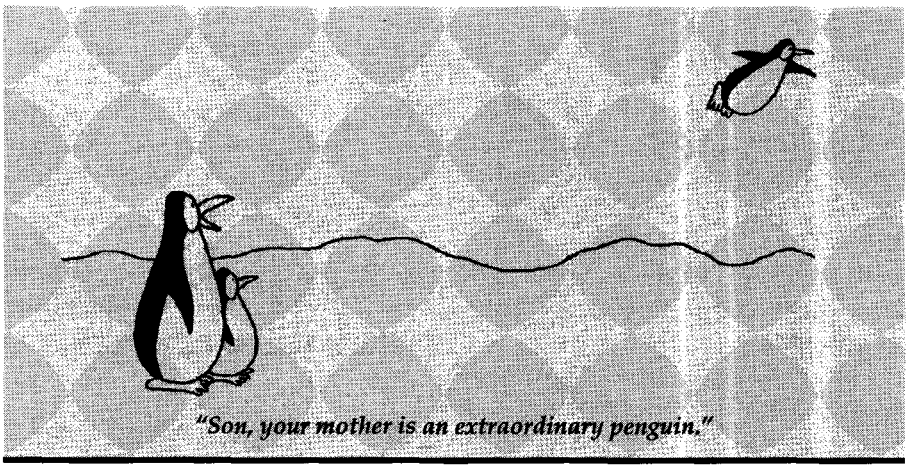
than were men in Catholic colleges. Is this still true of the now coeducational colleges? The Neylan member presidents want to find out.

At the Neylan Commission meeting in Washington last month, members studied preliminary findings on a Neylan Outreach Activities/Projects Inventory—a measure of whether social concerns were still high on Neylan students' agendas. (Before the 1989 report, the Higher Education Research Association had estimated that Neylan graduates were 30 percent more socially concerned and oriented toward service than graduates of other institutions.) At first blush, the findings of the inventory indicate that Neylan students were still highly interested in serving the community. And since the activities and projects were those sponsored by the institutions rather than individuals, it would seem that the Neylan colleges inspired the students. There were 1,170 activities or projects that involved 37,201 people on Neylan campuses. They included helping in nursing homes, working on literacy programs, staffing food drives, building with Habitat for Humanity, and similar efforts to provide housing for the homeless and the poor—all evidence of a response to gospel values.

There is little doubt that these institutions, founded by religious women, are outstanding in producing graduates interested in participating in projects serving the community, but also in choosing service careers. In addition, as *Taking Women Seriously* (Oryx, 1999) states, in the reorganization of colleges that has taken place since the 1960s and in Catholic colleges especially, there has been an enhancement of the mission to serve the underserved, seen as students of color from the inner city, single mothers, "returning" women (those over twenty-two), and working women who cannot attend during regular collegiate hours. But the mission statements of these colleges promise much more—an education flowing from the charisma of their founders and striving to form "*the moral and ethical conscience of the global community*" (emphasis mine).



"Son, your mother is an extraordinary penguin."

As a stated goal, that takes one's breath away. Even more astonishing is the decision taken at the Neylan Conference in 1986 that called for the establishment of a collaborative effort to serve women's educational needs *around the world*. As Brigid Driscoll, R.S.H.M., and Alice Gallin, O.S.U., reported: "A critical link was made between the education of women and the potential to solve the overwhelming, worldwide problems of famine, disease, and conflict."

It may seem an impossible dream but we can't discount the way dreams were made realities by women religious in the past. At the beginning of this century, the system of education for women (and later for women and men), today represented by the Neylan institutions, would have seemed unlikely, too. □

James Finn

JERZY TUROWICZ, R.I.P.

1912–99

When Jerzy Turowicz died of a heart attack at age eighty-six on January 27, Poland lost a great and wise man. But to say only this fails to take his true measure, since for decades his salutary influence extended far beyond his native country.

Turowicz was deeply immersed in the politics, the religion, the culture of Poland, but it was as the editor of the Cracow-based *Tygodnik Powszechny* (*Universal Weekly*) that he met his most severe challenges and made his greatest contributions. His tenure at the Catholic weekly encompassed the great historical parenthesis that we know as the cold war. He joined the staff soon after the paper was founded by church leaders in 1945, but when he became editor six years later he made it independent of both church and state. From then until his death he frequently outraged politicians and sometimes church authorities as he established the paper as an arena of truth in a time of deceit and intimidation; a citadel of standards that were under constant assault; a point of stability amid political and moral turbulence.

Turowicz by personal example lived the message his weekly regularly conveyed. When Eastern Europe lay crushed under a militant and seemingly impregnable communism, he demonstrated that history is not a preordained, inexorable process to which one must simply yield; individual persons can make a difference; faith and reason are stronger than philosophical materialism; religion is the first freedom, the fount and spring from which others flow and which it constantly nourishes. He revealed not only the cynicism of Stalin's derisive question, "How many divisions has the pope?" but also its stupidity. He was able to translate

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such large issues into terms readily grasped by the flesh-and-blood people for whom they were intended, both the Polish citizens and those under whose rule they suffered and struggled. It was the rare combination of these abilities that enabled him to make *Tygodnik Powszyechny* the freest and most trusted paper in Eastern Europe.

I first met Jerzy Turowicz in the offices of *Commonweal* when I was an editor. Not long before, state authorities had seized his paper and dismissed him because he had refused, on the death of the murderous Stalin, to publish a eulogy. The paper was given over to PAX, a group of Polish Catholics who judged it better to collaborate with rather than oppose their Communist rulers. (A representative of PAX later appeared in the *Commonweal* office to explain the superior wisdom and sophistication of their ways.)

Such was the moral authority of Turowicz, however, that three years after he was bounced out, the Communists, wishing to recoup credibility lost during the Polish and Hungarian uprisings, returned the paper to him.

Over the years, I met Turowicz a number of times, both during his infrequent trips to the United States and mine to Cracow. His low-keyed, unassuming manner and neat but well-worn clothes did nothing to reveal the stature he had attained. His colleagues and acquaintances, however, waxed warm in their appreciation of his work and their near-reverence for the man. He had become one of those editors around whom stories swirled, his canniness and insight the stuff of legend. Forced to submit each planned issue to government censors before publication, he would leave gaping spaces where prohibited material was to have appeared. Displeased with having their censorship so blatantly displayed, government authorities put a stop to that practice. Turowicz devised other ways to reveal their tactics. He also developed an Aesopean style that allowed him to communicate to the sensitively attuned reader messages that passed smoothly under the eyes of the literal-minded censors. During the government-directed, anti-Semitic purges of 1968, he published articles by writers whose Jewish origins were clearly evident. Dependent on the government for paper supplies, the press run of the weekly was limited to 50,000—and it was sometimes less when an irritated government wanted to put the squeeze on Turowicz. This led friends and an active underground press to copy and distribute even more than their usual number of the paper.

Against the opposition of the formidable Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski, he openly advocated church reform. A close and longtime friend of John Paul II, whose poems and essays he had published when the future pope was the Cracow-based Karol Wojtyla, he advised on a number of papal encyclicals. Nevertheless, after the liberation of Poland, he felt free to differ with John Paul on specific issues important enough to put a temporary crimp in their relations.

He was not always encouraged by events outside the Soviet-dominated orbit. Not only were there strong Communist parties in Western democracies, but the worst crimes of Soviet rulers, including gulags, anti-Semitic purges, and show trials, found apologists among noted Western intellectuals and artists. The United States implicitly urged subjugated peoples to revolt and then stood helplessly by when their uprisings were crushed. And even as the Polish people were suffering under the scourge of Soviet domination, they heard a president of the United States declare on TV that Poland was a free nation and witnessed another president welcome the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu as a lover of freedom and liberation. During all of these trials, Turowicz endured—and prevailed.

In Poland, his death was a time of deep mourning, an acknowledgment of an irretrievable loss, and a public thanksgiving for what Turowicz had contributed so abundantly during years of national humiliation, suffering, and lonely trial. We would do well to share, however tenuously, in these feelings.

May he rest in peace. □

James Finn, *a* Commonweal *editor from 1955 to 1961, is chairman of the Puebla Institute.*

Stephen De Mott

DON'T CRY FOR PINOCHET

Rescuing the general

The arrest in London last October of Chile's aging former dictator, Augusto Pinochet, has, if nothing else, revealed some disturbing political fault lines that reach around the globe and even criss-cross the Vatican.

The eighty-three-year-old senator-for-life endures house arrest in a posh English country home awaiting the outcome of extradition hearings that may land him in a courtroom in Spain. Meanwhile, lawyers, activists, politicians, cardinals, and even the pope are arguing over his fate as well as related issues of national sovereignty and impunity for human-rights abusers.

In mid-January, I returned to one of the epicenters of this quake: Santiago, Chile. Under a gritty, gray sky, in the heart of the downtown shopping district, only blocks away from the site of Pinochet's bloody 1973 *coup d'état*, I walked alongside a demonstration organized by the Families of the Detained-Disappeared. Faces were familiar to me from the years I had served in Chile as a Maryknoll missioner. The protesters, mostly women, carried pictures of loved ones on placards with the words, "Where are they?" Even under civilian rule their question has not been answered satisfactorily. As they marched, they shouted their support for the Spanish judge who is trying to bring Pinochet to justice. They also demanded an end to impunity.

I have long considered the Families of the Detained-Disappeared the conscience of Chile. Having seen their loved

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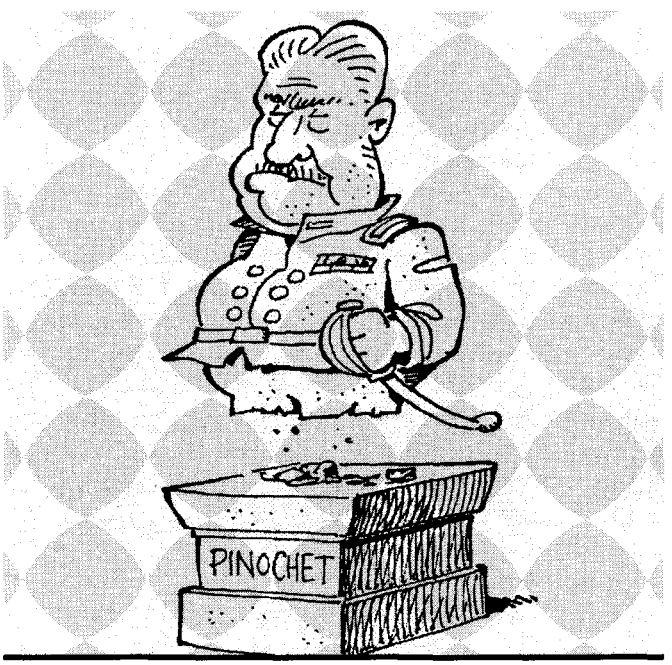
ones arrested by authorities of the state, they have endured official denials, threats, and persecution in their quest for the truth. They have marched, fasted, prayed, and gone to jail. Thanks to their efforts the remains of some of the disappeared have, in recent years, been dug up from common graves. Whereas Pinochet defends his actions saying he was at war with armed Communists, bodies are found with hands tied behind their backs and bullet holes in the back of their heads.

The survivors of Pinochet's reign of terror know, sadly, that justice will never be achieved in Chile, at least not under the present constitution, written by the general himself. After torturing, killing, and exiling his enemies (more than 3,000 died under his command), Pinochet granted himself immunity from prosecution, named himself senator-for-life, and stacked Chile's congress with designated senators to ensure that the constitution is never changed. That's why his victims now look to England and Spain.

There is merit to the Chilean government's argument that Pinochet be allowed to return home out of respect for its national sovereignty and its ongoing process of return to full democracy. As with any dictator, Pinochet would never have agreed to relinquish power without some guarantee of immunity. That left Chilean society, as the saying goes in Spanish, "between a wall and a sword." But Chile's deal with the devil not only ignores understandable international concerns about what to do about dictators, but also leaves unanswered the legitimate claims of torture victims and relatives of the disappeared who have seen justice delayed for more than a quarter-century. The average men and women on Chile's street corners, however, remain divided on what to do. While 64 percent think Pinochet is guilty, according to a December opinion poll, only 44 percent think it's a good thing he was arrested; 45 percent say it's a bad thing, and 11 percent express no opinion.



In February, *The Tablet* of London carried a story that five cardinals were alleged to be seeking the pope's mediation on behalf of Pinochet's release. One of them is Cardinal Jorge Medina Estéves, formerly bishop of Rancangua, Chile, and now prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship. Medina is an old friend of Pinochet, and even received a pectoral cross from the general. The others are Cardinals Angelo Sodano, Vatican secretary of state and former nuncio in Chile (1978–88), Joseph Ratzinger, Alfonso López Trujillo, and Eduardo Martínez Somalo.

"This situation shows us the other side of the church," said Dr. Fanny Pollarolo, a psychiatrist and member of Chile's Socialist party. While noting the heroism of church leaders like Santiago's now retired Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez, she said, "Angelo Sodano, who did nothing to save lives [during the dictatorship], now wants to save the dictator."

Joaquin Navarro-Valls, spokesman for the Vatican Information Office, acknowledged that the Holy See did appeal to the British government on Pinochet's behalf. The letter, according to *The Tablet*, was signed by Sodano with the approval of John Paul II. Navarro-Valls said, however, it was motivated by a request from the Chilean government, "consisting of a Christian Democratic and Socialist coalition, which has made its claim for sovereignty...."

The Vatican's apparent decision to allow concern for the principle of national sovereignty to override justice for the victims of gross human rights abuses is most troubling. It seems to contradict John Paul II's eloquent defense of the dignity and rights of the human person—especially the poor, marginalized, and politically powerless. Rome might at least have remained silent until Pinochet was brought to trial and his victims were given an opportunity to tell their stories.

Looming over the case of Pinochet is the troubling question of what to do about other dictators and human-rights abusers whose crimes against humanity transcend the boundaries of the countries in which they were committed. Or what about those who, like Pinochet, will never be brought to justice in their own homelands? Meanwhile, abusers have been put on notice. When Congo's Laurent Kabila was planning a recent trip to Belgium, he sent an advance party to find out if anyone was looking to arrest him. One can't help but wonder if Henry Kissinger, who was part of the CIA strategy that destabilized Chilean society prior to 1973 and helped pave the way for Pinochet, isn't also doing some extra pretravel investigations.

Meanwhile, in Florida, comfortably retired Salvadoran generals Eugenio Vides Casanova and José Guillermo Garcia, both cited in the case of the rape and murder of two Maryknoll sisters, an Ursuline sister, and a lay missioner in 1980, must also be anxiously watching the news on Pinochet. In contrast to Kabila, both are graduates of the U.S. Army School of the Americas and at least have the reassurance that the U.S. State Department would be understandably reluctant about any trial that might bring to light even more embarrassing connections to human-

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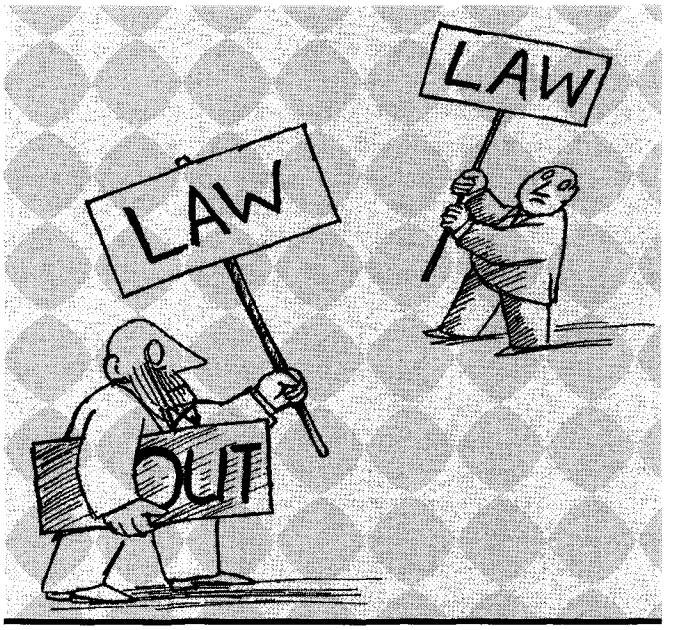
rights abuses in Latin America.

Pinochet, then, is not the only one biting his nails. The governments of Britain, Spain, Chile, Congo, the United States, and the Vatican are no doubt all wishing this case would go away. Perhaps, the U.K. will suddenly allow the convalescing octogenarian to go home for "humanitarian reasons." But as evidence piles up about the unspeakable things Pinochet did to his enemies, that option grows less acceptable.

Given England's extradition process, one of the longest and most arduous in the world, Pinochet may die before it ends. What refuses to die, however, is the disconcerting question of the role of international law regarding notorious human rights abusers and those who commit crimes against humanity. If Pinochet, whose agents tortured and killed citizens of many nationalities and carried out assassinations well beyond Chile's borders, including in Washington, D.C., is immune from international prosecution, then who is not immune? If victims cannot achieve some measure of justice in this case and under these circumstances, then, we must ask ourselves, in what other case and under what other circumstances? These questions will remain with us long after Pinochet is gone. □

Stephen De Mott, M.M., *is publisher and executive editor of* Maryknoll *magazine.*



Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Jr.

PROTESTING ABORTION

Free speech or no?

Since 1993 there have been seven murders and fourteen attempted murders of abortion-clinic personnel, as well as more than two hundred clinic bombings and arsons. In this atmosphere one can readily understand that those who work in abortion clinics feel physically endangered. But by whom? By protesters who speak out against what happens in the clinics? Where should the line be drawn between protesters' free-speech rights and what the law calls "true threats" or extortion? Does a website that included names and addresses of abortion clinics and doctors and that offers cash rewards for the prevention of abortions amount to threatening and provocative speech beyond the protection of the First Amendment?

A recent case in Portland, Oregon, imposed civil liability on anti-abortion protesters for activity that abortion providers found threatening. A local chapter of Planned Parenthood and individual physicians who provide abortions in Planned Parenthood clinics brought their suit under both the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (1994), which makes it illegal to use "force or threat of force" against abortion clients or providers, and the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) law. The primary focus of the suit was a website called the "Nuremberg Files" (found on the Web at christiangallery.com/atrocity), operated by the principal defendants, the American Coalition of Life Activists (ACLA). The website featured the names and addresses of abortion clinics and doctors, and offered cash rewards for the prevention of abortions. Deciding that ACLA had gone beyond constitutionally protected political speech by threatening abortion providers, the jury ordered the coalition to pay $107 million in damages.

In recent times, the Supreme Court has set a high standard of protection for political protest. In *Madsen* v. *Women's Health Center* (1994), the Court disallowed an injunction preventing abortion opponents from approaching persons seeking services at an abortion clinic unless there was "evidence that the protesters' speech is independently proscribable (that is, 'fighting words' or threats), or is so infused with violence as to be indistinguishable from a threat of physical harm." The Court added in *Schenck* v. *Pro-Choice Network* (1997) that there is no legitimate government interest in protecting the "right of the people approaching and entering [clinics] to be left alone" on the public streets, traditionally open to all sorts of communications. Still, the question of what constitutes a threat remains slippery. Some lower courts have diluted the idea of a threat to mean virtually any words that do not support the tentative decision of a woman to have an abortion.

Anti-abortion protest is political speech, normally to be accorded broad protection. Think of tough labor organizers urging scabs not to cross a picket line. In a host of labor law decisions, the Court has protected some pretty rough talk as long as there was no physical violence. Sometimes the Court has even understood that name-calling can lead to blows, and has looked the other way to preserve what Justice William Brennan described as "the central meaning of

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the First Amendment...the 'profound national commitment' that 'debate on public issues should be uninhibited, robust, and wide open.'"

For example, the Court dealt sensibly with a famous economic boycott called by a Mississippi chapter of the NAACP from 1966 to 1973 to protest the failure of local officials to desegregate public schools, hire black police officers, or include blacks on juries. Charles Evers, the NAACP field secretary, made a number of fiery speeches, warning "Uncle Toms" who broke the boycott that they would "have their necks broken by their own people." "Enforcers" stood guard at the doors of boycotted businesses to take down the names of blacks frequenting them. The names were published in a local black newspaper and read aloud at NAACP meetings. For most boycott violators, punishment stopped at being called demeaning names, but sometimes physical coercion followed.

In *NAACP* v. *Claiborne Hardware* (1977), the Court reversed the huge damage award that the stores had won against the civil rights organization in the state court. Evidently the NAACP's physical intimidation of the boycott breakers was not significant enough to forfeit the group's free speech rights or force them to pay disproportionate financial damages. The Court was willing to countenance clearly threatening language in order to protect the NAACP's vital role in promoting civil rights activity.

It is difficult to extend constitutional protection to the message of the NAACP and withhold it from the message espoused by abortion protesters. Some simply pray silently in front of a clinic. Others express their views by holding a placard either with a slogan like "An abortion stops a beating heart," or with a disturbing photograph. But we shouldn't imagine that on an issue as deeply divisive as abortion those who take their protest to the streets—on either side of the divide—will always be polite. Or logical. ACLA publishes *A Time to Kill*, a short book in which one of the named defendants, Michael Bray, argues that the use of force is legitimate to protect the lives lost in abortion facilities, a position abhorrent to those of us committed to a consistent ethic of life.

Still, the courts will get into a hopeless morass and our public life will be enfeebled unless speech of all sorts is protected, except—as the Court ruled in *Brandenburg* v. *Ohio* (1968)—where it is actually likely to result in imminent danger of violence. Planned Parenthood does its cause no service by complaining about the distribution of bumper stickers urging the execution of abortionists as murderers, or about "Wanted" posters that do not specifically identify doctors or clinics by name. However disturbing these forms of communication might be, they do not constitute true threats and should be protected by the First Amendment.

More worrisome is Planned Parenthood's use of the federal RICO statute, designed as a weapon against organized crime, to silence and financially bankrupt their political adversaries. As the feminist author Wendy Kaminer has written, the RICO statute "was not supposed to brand ideologically motivated activists as racketeers or extortionists." The most dubious legal claim advanced by Planned Parenthood is that ACLA violated RICO by maintaining "The Nuremberg Files." As its title suggests, the website expects that abortion providers "will be charged in perfectly legal courts once the tide of this nation's opinion turns against the wanton slaughter of God's children." Recording information about abortion providers for the purpose of bringing them to justice in a procedurally fair manner seems clearly within the realm of protected speech. ACLA's website also published the names and addresses of 225 doctors who perform abortions. The names of those classified as "working" were printed in black font, those "wounded" appeared in gray, and fatalities had a strikethrough across their name. Planned Parenthood and their doctors testified that they feel threatened by this, as though ACLA had identified targets on a hit list. A spokesman for ACLA defended the "fatality" notice as merely reportorial. Currently, the website no longer publishes a list of names, but still seeks help in gathering evidence identifying abortion providers and "judges and politicians who pass or uphold laws authorizing [abortions] or oppressing prolife activists."

Now that the court has allowed a huge penalty (RICO permits courts to triple damage awards) against the ACLA website on the ground that it "threatens" life, the appellate court will have to decide whether there was enough of a serious threat to extinguish the protection of the First Amendment. ACLA argues that their statements were intended to protect, not to threaten, life. The trial judge determined that a speaker's intent is irrelevant, instructing the jury under the current standard in the Ninth Circuit that a threat is determined "objectively" by focusing on what a reasonable and informed listener would make of the words. But there are different standards in various circuits. For instance, the Second Circuit in New York requires jurors to take a speaker's intent into account, ruling that free-speech protection can only be revoked if "the threat on its face and in the circumstances in which it is made is so unequivocal, unconditional, immediate, and specific as to the person threatened, as to convey a gravity of purpose and imminent prospect of execution." Unless the Ninth Circuit modifies its view, this case may be headed for the Supreme Court to resolve the apparent conflict between the circuits. The Court has not favored congressional efforts to police the Internet, striking down the Communications Decency Act in *Reno* v. *ACLU* (1997). But if the high court takes this case, the radical rhetoric of the anti-abortionists may further complicate things. In the past the website has included among the "abortionists' shysters" six justices: Sandra Day O'Connor, David Souter, Anthony Kennedy, John Paul Stevens, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and—most curiously—Byron White (the retired justice who denounced *Roe* in a stinging dissent as an "exercise in raw judicial power"). Time will tell whether life-tenured justices also feel threatened by such talk. □

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WALKING WHERE JESUS WALKED

The stones of Jerusalem

Alane Salierno Mason

The ways of Sion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts; all her gates are desolate; her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness.

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH

He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. MATTHEW 28:6

Jerusalem was not, at first, a geographic place on my map; it existed for me only as metaphor, and to think of it otherwise seemed even a little gauche, like asking for a chemical analysis of the Communion wine. I had never thought of it as a place I might visit until I was offered the trip, the chance to attend an international book fair. Even then, I hesitated. My vague sense of a "real" place called Jerusalem was infused with danger.

"Oh, but you can walk the stations of the cross!" a friend of mine said.

"I can do that here," I said.

"No," she said, "these are the *real* stations, where Jesus actually walked." With those words she made the spiritual Jerusalem geographical to me, and I was not at all sure that was what I wanted it to become.

Still, the thought of achieving some as-yet-unimagined depth of religious experience started to sneak in and take its hold. People started telling me about Jerusalem syndrome, where a devout seeker actually goes mad and ends up standing outside the gates in sackcloth and ashes, calling the people to repentance, claiming to be Moses or Jeremiah or John the Baptist or Mary Magdalene. This gave me a shiver; I could imagine it happening to me. I began to set aside the books I would take in my luggage: Augustine's *Confessions*, Bernanos's *La Joie*, Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain* which I was ashamed not to have yet read. I might be going for work, but I would make it a pilgrimage. These were books to read in silent spaces, of which there would be none.

This was 1993, and the *intifada* was in full swing. But I hadn't absorbed much more sense of the conflict than the general American understanding that people are all a little crazy over there in the Middle East. At a gathering given by the organizers for all the people going to the book fair, I stood in a small group of neophytes listening to a veteran prepare us for the city.

"Jerusalem is such a tremendous place for Jews," he said. "If you're Jewish, it's tremendously powerful to see that city. It doesn't matter if you've never been religious before."

"Yes," I said enthusiastically, joining in the spirit, "I imagine it must be powerful for Christians too, from everything I've heard...." I was thinking of "the real stations," where

Alane Salierno Mason *is an editor at W.W. Norton. Her "Respect: An Italian-American Story" appeared in the October 10, 1997 issue of* Commonweal.

The illustrations are by Chicago artist **Franklin McMahon**. *They are part of a series with text by Irene McMahon, "Take up Your Cross and Follow Me: The Stations of the Cross in Jerusalem," to be published in April by The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre in celebration of their 900th anniversary.*

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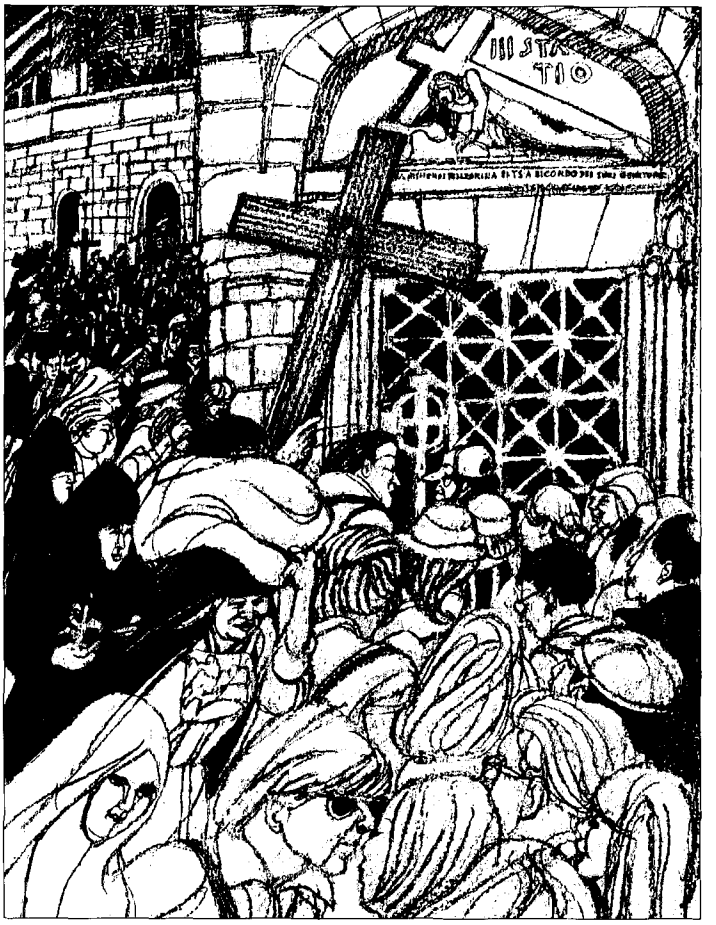
Jesus walked, and the penitent Mary Magdalene at the city gate, but the Jerusalem veteran didn't seem to hear me.

"Really, for any Jew, it's an overwhelming thing, you can't help but feel the connection," he went on. When he finished, and everyone had nodded, I tried again.

"You know, as a Catholic, I'm really looking forward to...." He turned his back to me. I stood, embarrassed in the way one is when there is half a sentence hanging out and no way either to finish it or to pull it back in, wondering how it could be possible he really had not heard me.



It had not yet occurred to me how much of life and politics is in what one hears, and what one chooses not to hear; and the meaning one finds, the interpretation one gives, to the words that get through. It has taken some time to begin to understand that this man might have been talking about the feeling of encountering a community that wraps itself around you like a warm robe, of not being an outsider. Of finding that the calendar is your calendar, the holidays are your holidays, not someone else's. Of feeling that the powers-that-be are already on your side (rather than against you) because of a shared tradition, that no one who matters is making assumptions that exclude you. For me to interject my vision of Jerusalem—transcendent, holy to all faiths—into such a discussion was a big boo-boo, from the acknowledgment of which my back-turning colleague was no doubt only trying to spare me. Or perhaps he simply could not explain what he felt to an outsider.

At the same time, I thought I was relating to what he was saying. I'd been casting about for a while for some clue as to what it meant to be Catholic, some sense of being part of a living tradition. I was open to the possibility that Jerusalem could tie us all closer to our faiths, why not?

I was completely unprepared for the physical and the political nature of the place, the smell of orange blossoms and dry heat when I left the airport in Tel Aviv, relieved to have been allowed to enter the country at all after the forty-five-minute interrogation I had had by three El Al security people at Kennedy. ("The *last* guy just asked me that same question!" I had kept proclaiming in exasperation, not understanding the technique.)

Once in Israel, I was shocked to see, on the wall of a religious school outside Jerusalem, a sign with an American flag thanking "the people of the United States" for support in building it—wasn't it illegal to use government funds to build religious schools in our own country? I was astonished to see teenaged kids everywhere, sauntering and chatting and drinking Coca-Cola, as one might expect, gorgeous tresses of long black curls trailing down the backs of many of the girls; but in uniform and with machine guns casually slung under their arms or across their backs. As I say, I was completely unprepared.

We arrived, without knowing it, on the Eastern Orthodox Good Friday. (Easter Sunday was also Holocaust Memorial Day, an impossible conjunction for someone who might want to recognize both.) The following night, a British journalist—our British companions, with their national memory of having once run the place, didn't shy away from the Arab quarters, as many of the Americans did—led a small group of us to dinner in East Jerusalem, at an old hotel "known" to be a "secret" meeting place of diplomats and the PLO: The American Colony, an exotic place richly decorated with carpets and tiles, with a courtyard of lemon and orange trees. In the balmy courtyard we drank excellent wine from Galilee and inside, ate from dozens of delicious tiny dishes, plates appearing and disappearing at the hands of four gracious waiters—British colonialism suddenly understandable as quite a good idea, from the colonialist point of view. But having discovered the Eastern Orthodox calendar, I was determined to find a way to the midnight Easter vigil at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the holiest place in Christendom, deep in the Muslim quarter of the Old City. I was afraid to go alone, so the only option was to persuade my dinner companions—a group from many backgrounds—to go with me. Our waiters pointed the way, only a short walk, they said, to the Damascus Gate.

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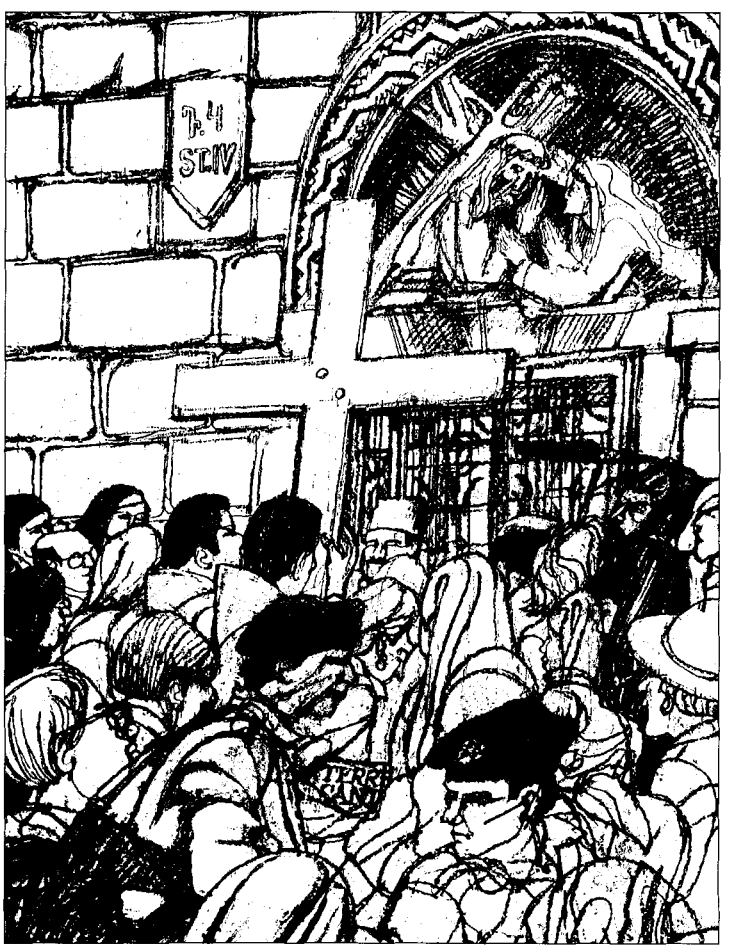
Holy city, eternal city, city of light, whereof Jeremiah spoke, "For lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about...."

City of stones. The feel of them, ancient and worn, under thin-soled shoes, has a charismatic effect on the whole body. In the dark, they are companions, absorbing fear, on the way from the Damascus Gate toward the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The streets are far from empty. To the side, the shuttered market stalls reveal their presence by smell: of pepper, of hard cheese and animal blood, of cumin and coriander and especially the strong scent of cardamom, a cacophony of spices, of olives and vinegar, of dusty wool and oiled new wood, of coffee and sweet hot mint tea. Some of them are still open to serve the crowd of people flowing from doors and arches and alleys, down stairs, some carrying candles or folding chairs or a wooden stool, into the main artery toward the church that Saint Helena, mother of Constantine, built to mark the sites she identified through legend and inner vision as those of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus.

The crowd thickens and slows. Some stalls are open to sell candles, rosary beads, holy water from the River Jordan, small vials of blessed earth from this sacred land itself. There is a heavy resonating report against the stones, a striking sound of wood against rock; and again, vibrating through the crowd and parting it; and again, as the black-cloaked and mitered Greek Orthodox priest, with a long gray beard stretching to his waist, lifts his gilded staff and brings it down sharply. He is at the head of a swaying robed procession of priests, all with ornate heavy staffs, with which, every few steps, they strike the stones. There is a burst of chanting; and another, somewhere else in the dark. Inside the vast church, the crowd of hundreds mills about—Armenians, Palestinians, Greeks, Africans, women in embroidered dress and white headscarves, men smoking, hundreds holding candles, dripping hot wax, chanting, waiting. The church is cavernous. Near the empty Roman Catholic chapel, in a little-used part of the church, there are building materials on the floor, and a smell of urine. In the center, the Orthodox vigil is going on: all the candles are lit; small gold-tasseled tapestries, hung high on staffs, twisted and swung over the heads of the crowd, which chants, stops, waits, chants again.



The smell of incense is overpowering, stinging my throat and mouth, already dry from having drunk too much Galilean red wine. Around the sides of the church, people mill about, talking. Behind the tiny shrine, which one bends to enter, built around Jesus' tomb, a group of men huddle around a prayerbook, singing and chanting, while the women sit at the sides, watching, praying, resting, waiting. They are Coptic, an ancient Egyptian Christian rite. Upstairs, in a chapel hung with gold lamps with a large Byzantine crucifix, someone tells me to put my hand through a goldrimmed hole in the floor, under the altar. I do, and feel cool, smooth, flat rock. The rock of Golgotha.

I stand up, and see an old woman, her face finely lined and serene, in a chair with her stockinged feet tucked under her, fast asleep. A bearded Orthodox priest is teaching something to a small boy, who is writing something on a pad; he shows it to the priest, who nods and smiles. I fret about how to cross myself and pray without being seen by my colleagues, and manage to position myself behind a pillar. Three Israeli security police saunter through in their tan uniforms, rifles slung over their shoulders.

Downstairs, old women are strewing rose petals over the marble slab representing the place where Jesus' body was washed before burial. The slab is wet with pools of water which seems to have appeared miraculously, while the women kiss the stone, dampen their rosary beads in the water, bathe and stroke their own worn faces with it, praying. It seems that the stone will be bathed eternally, that it has never been dry since Jesus' body was washed on the spot.

From another upstairs room there is a stairway to an Ethiopian monastery, an African village of mud-walled cells on the roof of

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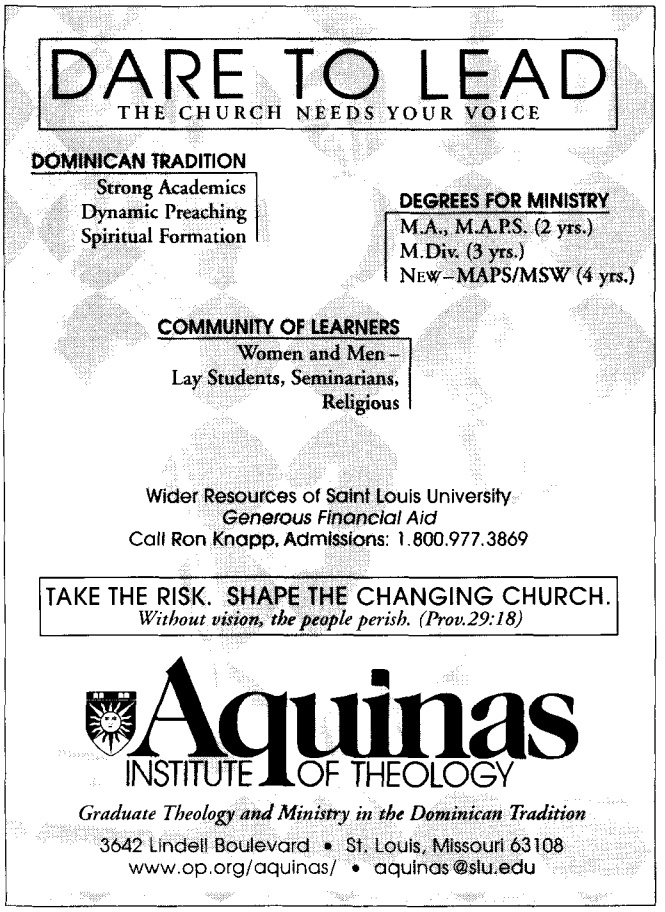

the church, near the pillar marking the ninth station, where Jesus falls for the third time. Down in the courtyard, light spills from a crowded chapel of Ethiopians quietly singing, wrapped head-to-toe in dazzling white cloth, their smooth dark faces radiantly beautiful in a wash of light from oil lamps and candles, the mood more solemn and still than in the main church.

The next morning, in West Jerusalem, those of us who had ventured down the Damascus Road from the orange-and-lemon-scented courtyard of the American Colony Hotel into the Old City at night were roundly condemned for our foolishness. One of my companions, recounting what he'd seen, commented in awestruck tones, "You could see, right there, the source of everything that's wrong with the world, all that fanaticism."

She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they are become her enemies.

I wonder how European medieval pilgrims felt when they reached the Holy City after months and months of difficult, dangerous travel. Were they disappointed to find a city made of earth and stones, like other cities? Did the physical sites of their belief seem real, or hollow? Did they always believe that their relics were indeed fragments of the True Cross? Or were they conscious of the sediment put down by centuries, layers of meaning and sensibility, on any one of which they might be allowing themselves to be conned, or ridiculous? Or were they hooligans, rowdies, adventurers along for the ride? Were they spellbound by the landscape, its gorgeous hills spotted with white stone, its sudden shifts in terrain from one hill to another; confused by its accretions of time and meaning; frightened by its politics; entranced by its suggestions of the presence of the invisible and frustrated by its invisibility, as I was? Were they all of the above?

Jerusalem asks more questions than it answers. Its literalness, the flesh of its existence in history—its churches with their layers of Franciscan stucco over Ottoman embellishment of Crusader castle built on Byzantine ruins of Herodian stone—the flesh of its existence in history is fascinating, and embarrassing.

I met a young Jewish man who had "made *aliyah*," returned to Israel out of religious devotion, and had been living in Jerusalem. Jerusalem, he said, was another Disneyland, a religious theme park. It had made him lose his faith.

The Friday after Orthodox Easter, I followed the procession along the Via Dolorosa, with the "real stations, where Jesus walked." The procession was led by a young Roman priest with a microphone; the familiar chants were overpowered by the Muslim call to prayer at the nearby Dome of the Rock, broadcast over loudspeakers. The mass of yellow sunhats worn by a large group of tourists trying to stay together was distracting to any devotional mood; many held video cameras over the heads of the crowd while brown-frocked friars, looking bored, grimly ignoring the flashbulbs, tried to herd the edges of the crowd in the right direction. The Muslims had a much better sound system, while the Franciscans had only one small amplifier that a lead friar carried on a shoulder strap while he and his brethren read and sang into the microphone. At, perhaps, the second or third station, he read the only lines I could hear clearly, "We live in an earthly city; yet we look for a heavenly one." No kidding, I thought.

Then as at each station, he led the prayers. *Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be. The Fourth Station, Veronica wipes the face of our Lord.*

I had seen two rooms of the Last Supper, one over a Syrian Orthodox convent with few visitors. I had also seen two sites of Jesus' burial; the Anglican one in a garden—full of cheerful Britishers photographing each other before the cave—had been established by those who dissented from Saint Helena's view, on which the Church of the Holy Sepulcher had been built. The overgrown place had its own sweet romance, and seemed more true than the gilded shrines of the Holy Sepulcher; a painted sign fixed to the gate of the Tomb reminded visitors: "He is not here, he is risen."

At the end of the procession of the stations of the cross, I was back in the Holy Sepulcher, and after the last station, where Christ is laid in his tomb, I peered in at a Coptic

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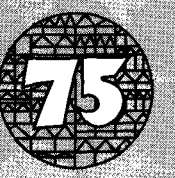
priest with his yellowed beard trailing over his belly, guarding the shrine behind the tomb. He allowed me to take his picture and to kiss his cheek in thanks. He reached to the altar beside him and pressed something into my palm: a small wooden cross with a tin figure of Christ. I wasn't sure at first that he meant me to keep it; I thought it was some ritual and I was supposed to stand there, the cross in the center of my palm, and say a prayer or perhaps a confession—the priest seemed to be waiting for me to do something, I didn't know what. Then he jostled my hand, indicating that the cross was mine to keep. It somehow seemed an answer to a question I hadn't even realized I'd asked, a communication I didn't even know I was thirsty for, and I clutched it, overwrought with emotion. All this time, I realized, I had been waiting for some kind of sign, and this one seemed so generous and concrete that on a stone step nearby, I sat and cried. Then I went to sit and pray in a silent ancient catacomb housing Joseph of Arimathea's tomb.

When I came out again the Coptic priest was still there, his yellow beard a streak across his vestments. He brought an extra stool into his shrine and made me sit beside him, while we tried to communicate in his very few words of English and my even fewer words of Arabic. He seemed delighted for my company, apologetic that he didn't have more English words to share with me, that the words he had were like unruly marbles in his snaggletoothed mouth. He pressed two more crosses into my hand from a box by his side I hadn't seen before—along with candles, intended to be given in return for donations. That had been what he had been waiting for before, but now that he'd seen the impression the cheap little cross had had on me, he wanted me to have more, *gratis*. I think he might have showered me with crosses if I'd wanted. He smiled hugely in his beard.

If the first cross had seemed a sign, the other two seemed a divine wink of uncertain meaning, both joke and affirmation. I clutched them in my sweaty hand. Three crosses, like the three lighted ones I had seen from a train near Washington a few months before, after an intense weekend with two friends where deep discussion of Catholicism had alternated with sweaty dancing in gay discos. Kitsch, like the three homemade triptychs of the Virgin Mary my friend P. had found at a yard sale, dividing them up among the three of us. Now three cheap wood-and-tin souvenirs, or signs of grace, to be divided the same way. I had spent much of my time in the holy city wishing my friends were there, to witness and grapple its strange alloys of sacred and secular. Three months after my return from Jerusalem, both would test positive for HIV; one would live, one would die.

I took the three crosses to dip them in the water on top of the marble slab of the Extreme Unction, as I had seen the old Greek ladies do; but the slab was by now almost entirely dry, scattered with withered rose petals, and I could only rub them in a few remaining spots of dampness. □

From the archives



Throughout 1999, Commonweal will be celebrating its 75th anniversary. Here from the March 16, 1927 issue is a poem by Paul Claudel (1868–1955), French poet, dramatist, and diplomat. Translated by Henry Morton Robinson.

Seventh Station

'Tis not the stones that conquer now, nor the knotted flails;
It is the soul that falters here, it is the soul that fails.

O midway of our mortal life when the strong soul is spent,
When the compass loses its polar star and faith its firmament,

Because the flinty road is long, the steep climb without end,
We seem to sink, abandoned by every hope and friend.

O lengthening years of weariness, inflexible cold fate!
Borne down by secret self-disgust and the cross's cruel weight

We fall at last, not on our knees in supplicating prayer,
But wretchedly, face downward, in agonized despair.

The jaded body falls, ah yes, but not till the tired will
stumbles—
Save us, Lord, from this second fall when the weary spirit
crumbles!

PAUL CLAUDEL

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Richard Alleva

NOTHING TO LAUGH ABOUT

'Life Is Beautiful'

Life Is Beautiful, co-written and directed by Roberto Benigni, is now the highest-grossing foreign film in U.S. history. Favorable reviews and word-of-mouth have sent audiences to it in droves. It has not only been nominated as the best foreign-language movie but is a contender for best picture in competition with the highly touted Hollywood products *Saving Private Ryan* and *Shakespeare in Love*. Playing the lead role, Benigni has won a best-actor nomination. By the time you read this, *Life Is Beautiful* will surely have triumphed in the foreign-language category. A singular achievement for, of all things, an Italian comedy that deals with the Holocaust.

But does it deal with the Holocaust? To be precise, is there a valid depiction of the Holocaust in this film?

Stalin killed, Pol Pot killed, the bloody opportunists of what used to be Yugoslavia killed, and many of their victims suffered as much as the Jews caught in Hitler's web. Yet the Final Solution seems to make evil reverberate in a way that no other atrocity does. Many valid reasons have been adduced—the technological expertise in slaughter, the attempted extinction of a people whose ethics laid the moral basis for Western civilization, the nurturing of evil within a culture that gave nineteenth-century Europe Goethe, Beethoven, and Kant. I wish to single out another reason, both for its own sake and because it is germane to the plot of Benigni's film.

Alone among the masters of evil, Hitler continues to make his fiendish case against life itself. He incited and still incites evil men to persecute "inferior" races, but he also made and still makes decent, even profound people (including Primo Levi, the great poet Paul Celan, possibly Jerzy Kosinski) so suspicious of the human race that they resort to suicide, thereby fulfilling Hitler's wish for their destruction with their own hands. I submit that any novelist, playwright, or filmmaker who addresses the Holocaust must never use it as a sentimental device that courts our tears simply because it happens to have entrapped his hero or heroine. When consumption carries off Camille or when cancer does in Meryl Streep in *One True Thing*, we cry and our tears are agreeable to us. But we must wince when the Holocaust is used as a comparable dramatic ploy, for to commit such artistic cynicism is to fiddle while Rome burns. Hitler is making his case now in the hearts of the tormented and in the hearts of the progeny of the tormented.

Let's give credit to Roberto Benigni for taking the struggle against the Nazi weapon of despair as his subject. His Jewish hero, Guido, moves to Arezzo to work in his uncle's restaurant. Guido is a zany who improvises miniature commedia dell'arte scenarios out of the most everyday of situations. He annoys many but charms some, especially a pretty (gentile) schoolteacher, whom he woos away from a pompous Fascist bureaucrat by perpetuating a series of funny ruses that make her think that the mostly hapless Guido has life at his beck and call. The style of this part of the movie is a gentle, airy version of the sort of farce hammered out in Hollywood by the likes of Jerry Lewis and Danny Kaye. But Benigni, both as actor and director, has a lighter touch than his American counterparts. I have never really cottoned to his puppy dog friskiness, but he is at his best here, and he and his co-star, the lovely and humane Nicoletta Braschi, give us a sort of etherealized farce, if you will, that strives not for belly laughs but indulgent smiles.

Within this pleasant first half of the narrative, Benigni plants a few sinister incidents, like land mines in a verdant meadow, that warn of the miseries to come. The uncle is roughed up (off screen) by Fascist bullies; Axis-admiring schoolteachers fashion algebra problems using terms of Nazi ideology; the uncle's horse is spattered with paint, but Guido rides that horse right into a party held to announce the engagement of his beloved to her Fascist boyfriend, and he canters off with the young woman riding pillion. What could the future hold for any hero who can create such a whirl of triumphant whimsy in the midst of a brutal regime?

Well, it could hold the death camps to which Guido and his little son are consigned in the film's second half, with the gentile wife going along voluntarily. Once again, our hero's genius for fantastical deception comes into play

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when he persuades the boy that the prison is really just a roughhewn vacation resort where pluck and endurance will be rewarded with a grand prize. By keeping the spirits of his loved ones intact, he helps save their lives.

Now, given this shift from courtship to survival strategy, from romantic slapstick to historical nightmare, what stylistic modulation does director Benigni attempt, what darkening of texture, what acceleration or retarding of tempo, what change in rhythm or new incisiveness in the dialogue alerts us to the fact that the universe has been transformed for Guido and that he is now battling not just for happiness but for sanity and existence?

None. No modulation, no essential stylistic shift, no fundamental darkening of tone. The concentration camp section of the film beams at us just as benevolently as the earlier episodes of amatory tomfoolery. Yes, yes, yes, I know that Benigni puts horrors before our eyes: starvation, forced labor, ultimately mass murder. But what happens to horror when it is instantaneously muffled by good taste and mild daffiness? See this movie and find out.

The phoniness begins with the train ride to the concentration camp taken by father and son. Survivors have written of these rides and how they left the travelers half dead and too abject to brace themselves for the abuses to come. But Benigni and the child actor shuffle out at the terminus looking discomfited, tired, but a lot less tired looking than people who have spent a few hours on a Greyhound bus. Yet they are supposed to have spent about twelve hours standing in a crowd of packed bodies suffering clammy heat, without recourse to bathroom facilities or refreshment. What we see refutes what we're told.

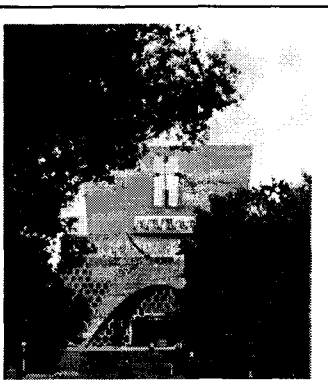
Do their living quarters evince the filth that breeds despair? No, they are merely bare and dank. Do the guards exhibit that unique Nazi blend of assiduousness and brutality? Well, they bark and glower but seem no worse than the foremen of some nineteenth-century factory, and, far from efficient, are sloppy enough to leave a PA system unguarded so that Guido can cheer up his wife in the women's quarters with a hopeful message. They even allow our hero to pass his boy off as one of the officers' children for a free meal in staff quarters, even though the boy is clearly dressed as a prisoner. (With enemies like these, who needs friends?) Do Guido's fellow inmates ever show that irritation, even ferocity toward other sufferers that often grows out of confinement in tight quarters? No, but then again they are allowed virtually no distinguishing traits but simply merge into the background against which Benigni enacts his fey, smiling-through-tears routines. Is the soul-battering of enforced, meaningless labor adequately shown? We do see the hero and his fellows huffing and puffing while moving objects like anvils about, but the scenes are milked for Chaplinesque pathos, a quality clearly inadequate given the circumstances.

And when it comes time to present the final enormity, the slaughter of the prisoners catalyzed by news of the Allied advance, Benigni has his masterly veteran cameraman, Tonino Delli Colli, create a blue-tinted shot of a huge heap of bodies dimly seen through mist. This gorgeous, almost Whistlerian composition epitomizes the wrong-headed achievement of this movie. It muffles horror, even aestheticizes it. Just as Guido transforms the horror of the camp into fun-and-games for the sake of his child's mental health, so does Benigni tame horror for the sake of the viewer's mental comfort. But what is heroic in the father is craven in the filmmaker. The Holocaust should never be comfortably conveyed.

(I hope it won't be argued that the horrors are muffled because we are seeing them from the protected boy's point of view. In fact, the viewpoint throughout is the father's, and we should feel the despair he fights against.)

There is one great scene. The camp doctor, Lessing, turns out to be a man who once befriended Guido because of his cleverness at posing and solving riddles. Lessing again helps and, at one point, beckons Guido aside. Is he going to whisper a plan of escape? Alas, he has only another riddle for Guido to solve. But a close-up of the doctor's ravaged face (to think this is that same Horst Buchholz, who was the pretty juvenile of *The Magnificent Seven* and *Tiger Bay*, now magnificently aged and profoundly expressive!) reveals the true meaning of the moment: soul-sickened by the horror he himself has abetted, Lessing has taken refuge in trivia the way a dying animal buries itself in its burrow. Here, the act of muffling horror makes the horror cry louder. This is what the entire movie should have done.

But what is wrong with *Life Is Beautiful* is the very thing that has ensured its success. By collapsing the greatest tragedy of our time into domestic pathos, it gives the audience permission to laugh and sob and applaud and, quite possibly, breathe a sigh of relief. The Holocaust? Not so special after all. One more excuse for a good cry. With *Life Is Beautiful*, Roberto Benigni has created the first agreeable movie about the Holocaust. This is an undeniable feat, but is it to be applauded? □



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Outlasting Rockefeller

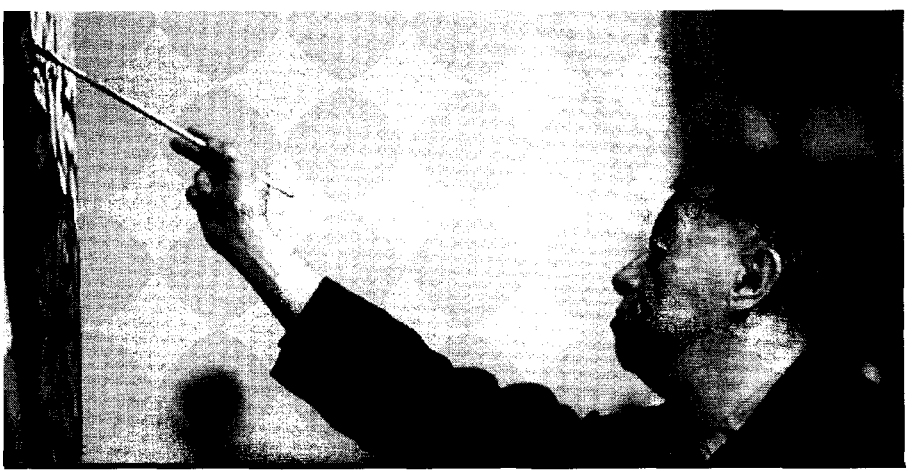
Dreaming with His Eyes Open
A Life of Diego Rivera
Patrick Marnham
Alfred A. Knopf, $35, 344 pp.

Donna Gustafson

Arguably the greatest mural painter of the twentieth century, the Mexican artist Diego Rivera was also a superb storyteller and a man who relished the attention of the press, the public, and beautiful women. The biographies of Rivera and his third wife, the painter Frida Kahlo, are surrounded by fables, some invented by themselves, others the result of their being stars in the international political wars that consumed so many intellectuals and artists between the two world wars. The difficult task that Patrick Marnham set himself in this book was to put all this aside and tell "the real journey made by the industrious young state bursar of the *Porfiriato*, the boy whose father was ruined, whose mother was impossible, but who had genius."

Marnham succeeds admirably in presenting a factual account of Rivera's life, and in describing his development into a politically engaged artist of significant stature. Full of fascinating and richly narrated detail, this slyly humorous book will be of interest not simply to those who hope to understand the enigmatic Rivera, but also to those who want to know more about his life with Kahlo, and anyone interested in the grand alliance between art and politics that was the Mexican Mural Movement.

Marnham reveals that Rivera was born, like so many of the rebels of twentieth-century art, into fairly comfortable middle-class circumstances and received an academic, thoroughly European training in art. He did not fight in the Mexican Revolution, nor was he a youthful insurgent at the academy as he liked to claim. He studied hard, did well, and won a scholarship to Europe to further his studies. Marnham takes pains to trace Rivera's course through Europe carefully and develops an account of the young artist's growth that emphasizes decisions made not in the service of aesthetics, but in order to gain critical attention. The author discusses Rivera's cubist period as an ambitious experiment (while short-lived, it marked his first recognition as an artist of talent) and reconstructs a series of quarrels that led to Rivera's abandonment of cubism and the Paris art world. Then convincingly Marnham credits the art historian Elie Faure not only with promoting Rivera's decision to travel to Italy to study the murals of the Renaissance, but with instilling in Rivera a genuine political ambition for his art. These discussions demythologize the great artist and present the young Rivera as an eccentric, hydrophobic character of questionable emotional and intellectual maturity.



Similarly, Marnham strips away any glamour that we might associate with the Mexican Revolution by relating the facts of the ten-year uprising. He also traces the continuities between the *Porfiriato* and the revolutionary government that was in place when Rivera returned to Mexico in 1921, by which time the revolution had already been betrayed. Having missed it entirely, the artist found himself at a disadvantage and hastened to become a revolutionary-after-the-fact. A study trip to the Yucatan opened his eyes to the Indian cultures of Mexico and enthusiasm for the ideals of the revolution, and led to his first government commission. From that point on, there was no stopping him.

To say that Rivera led an "unusual life," as Marnham does, is an understatement. He survived death threats in Mexico and the United States and battled heroically in both countries to save his murals from harm. He traveled throughout Europe, to Moscow to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, and with Kahlo, north of the border to "win acceptance for his politics as well as his art." In the United States, the Riveras were simultaneously courted by the rich and famous and castigated for their politics; their adven-

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tures provide ample opportunity for wise and witty commentary. Quoting directly from the participants instead of relying on stale interpretation, the author reconstructs the battles between Rivera and the Rockefellers (Rivera lost and his mural in Manhattan's Rockefeller Center was destroyed) and between Rivera and his unlikely ally, Edsel Ford, against his foes in Detroit (Rivera's mural at the Detroit Art Institute, one of the artist's masterpieces, stands).

Possibly of the greatest interest to many readers will be the relationship between Kahlo and Rivera that serves as the backbone of the second half of the book. Marnham falters somewhat in his attempts to plumb the depths of their symbiotic closeness and in explaining what he vaguely refers to as their "common imagination." Still, there are moments of real insight and it is important to be reminded that Rivera first bought his German-Jewish-Spanish-Mexican wife the Indian costumes and jewelry that became her signature dress. In this detail is buried much of significance of the relationship between the two, including their mythic status inside and outside Mexico and, not least, evidence of the couple's canny manipulation of imagery and identity. Marnham also tries to balance the Riveras' infidelities by discussing many of Kahlo's betrayals, the most famous being the affair that she initiated with Trotsky under the eyes of his protector in Mexico, Diego Rivera. When the truth slipped out (Marnham suggests that Kahlo made that inevitable) Rivera reacted by withdrawing his support from Trotsky—although never breaking with him politically—leaving the already doomed exile to his fate. This sequence is expertly narrated in a chapter aptly titled, "A Surrealist Deathtrap." Here as elsewhere, it is Marnham's political astuteness and wit that clarify the muddiest of intrigues—how else to comprehend a series of events that include the visit of the French surrealist leader André Breton and his wife, the political assassination of Trotsky, the Riveras' divorce (they later remarried), the arrest of the Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros, the death of the Italian photographer Tina Modotti, and much more.

The awkward moments in the book have to do, inevitably, with the author's desire to augment the artist's psychological profile through an analysis of his paintings and murals. While art historians routinely sift through an artist's life to explain aspects of his or her work, there are few instances when art can provide information to explain human motivations. The truth that one finds in any painting is two-dimensional, no matter how well constructed to reflect the three-dimensional world it may be. Still, this account of the most famous of *los tres Grandes* (Rivera, Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco) provides more insight into what really made Rivera the man he was than any other book to date, and it does so with great intelligence and subtle wit. □

Donna Gustafson *is curator of exhibitions at the American Federation of Arts.*

DESIGNER MODEL

Nature's Destiny
How the Laws of Biology Reveal the Purpose of the Universe
Michael J. Denton
Free Press, $27.50, 454 pp.

M. Therese Lysaught

Does God exist? Does creation in its very magnificence and intricacy give glory to God the creator? Is creation purposively moving teleologically toward a predetermined end? Is humanity the summit and pinnacle of creation? With some equivocation on the latter point, the Christian tradition has from the beginning answered all these questions resoundingly in the affirmative.

Armed with these convictions, some within the tradition have turned to creation, or rather "nature," to ground theological beliefs. For such "natural theologians," the splendor of creation points to the plausibility or necessity of a great grand Designer; thus we have Aquinas's or Paley's arguments from design, "proofs" for the existence of God upon which generations of college students have cut their philosophical teeth. Following in the legacy of Einstein, many contemporary scientists find themselves increasingly amazed and awed as the secrets of nature are unraveled, unable to resist the powerful impression that behind the complexities of the cosmos lies an unseen but guiding hand. And for many, the postulate of a designer suggests a teleology—that the cosmos is designed for a certain function, naturally evolving toward an end whose initial conditions are implanted in the very infrastructure of nature.

Michael J. Denton stands firmly in this heritage. Denton, the senior re-

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My Neighbors' Pools

The way seals ride the incline then
sweep like light down the scoured white
tanks, you know they're dreaming the sea.
Nights like these—windless—land-locked—
all I need is a wintry descent in someone's pool:
crescent or quadrangle, clotted with leaves
or made fast with tarp. That icy slip into otherness,
chest then hips grazing the pale slopes
of the pool floor. Numbness like a second
skin, eyes gone dark as a seal's
trespassing in the dead of night, out of season
in my neighbors' pools. Never the same one
twice in a fortnight, I've grown meticulous about latches
and gates, the loosening of knots, the first
lifted corner where the moon rides and the waters stir.

Arms folded close as fins, I rush the blackness
headfirst, hunt the circumference of each new pool,
the dark overlap of leaves in unfit corners, the chubby
rounds of crabapples, spiny feel of crickets.
Through the chill waking, I grow sleek and fat
in the frigid blue hold—so buoyant it seems
my flutter kick is all spine. I plummet and rise
through the underside of autumn, the scarlet bleed
of maple on oak, the skin-taut border of water
and halflight: brightening glance at the new world's rim.

Catherine Staples

search fellow in Human Molecular Genetics at the University of Otago in New Zealand, marshals an astounding array of facts to argue a bold claim: "The aim of this book is, first, to present the scientific evidence for believing that the cosmos is uniquely fit for life as it exists on earth and for organisms of design and biology very similar to our own species, *Homo sapiens*, and second, to argue that this 'unique fitness' of the laws of nature for life is entirely consistent with the older teleological religious concept of the cosmos as a specifically designed whole, with life and mankind as its primary goal and purpose."

For those given to accept this version of the "anthropic principle," Denton's evidence is impressive. It is so extensive, in fact, that it is almost overwhelming. Denton begins by building on the work of other contemporaries who have put forward similar arguments from within the field of physics and astrophysics, citing Freeman Dyson, Fred Hoyle, and Paul Davies, among others. However, Denton argues, the discoveries of physics find confirmation in spades from recent developments in biology, specifically molecular and cellular biology. Thus, Denton cites not only data from physics and geology that are "precisely fit for life"—for example, supernovae, stars, the gravitational force, the nuclear or strong force, the electromagnetic force, the weak force, the specific properties of water, light, oxygen, carbon, carbon dioxide, all the elements of the periodic table, radioactivity, plate tectonics, and the size of the planet Earth. What is important is that additional factors from biology—the composition and structure of the double helix, the "nanotechnology" of proteins, the importance of metal ions in metabolism, and cellular structure and action—conspire to "give every appearance of having been specifically arranged to that end," namely, the existence of life and specifically human existence. Or as Denton states more firmly, life-as-we-know-it is "not a matter of chance" but rather it is the "inevitable end of natural law."

And not only do "all facets of reality, from the size of galaxies to the thermal capacity of water, have their meaning and explanation in [the] central fact...that the cosmos is a specifically designed whole with life and mankind as its fundamental goal and purpose," Denton finds further evidence (not conclusive but highly suggestive) in the specifics of human morphology and ability—for example, that "the design and dimensions of the human body are fit for the handling of fire" and that "the laws of nature conform to mathematical patterns which the human mind seems curiously adapted to grasp." These factors, in conjunction with a myriad of other human capabilities, have uniquely positioned humanity for mastery and exploration of the universe.

As mentioned above, the collective weight of this evidence will strike the reader as amazing, due in no small part to Denton's rather breathless tone and his frequent acclamations of the convergence of various factors as "astonishing." However, for many readers, Denton's overall argument may not be convincing. Most readers will take for granted the "truth" of Darwinian evolution—the idea that life-as-we-know-it has evolved more or less randomly, through a series of more or less chance interactions between various organisms and their environments. Denton offers an alternative account to this familiar Darwinian paradigm, yet for at least three reasons readers may not find themselves swayed toward his vision.

First, Denton does not clearly articulate the fundamental assumptions that lie behind his alternative interpretation of the data. For example, he provocatively inverts traditional terminology,

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arguing not that "life" is particularly fit for its environment, but rather that the environment, as it is given, is "precisely fit for life." Because this linguistic inversion entails a rather profound conceptual shift, readers who are not familiar with anthropic presuppositions will not be equipped to evaluate how Denton moves from data to conclusion.

Second, Denton does not directly address Darwinian evolution (except for a brief and inadequate challenge to the accepted belief in the spontaneity of mutation in chapter 12). If he wishes to convert a Darwinian readership, however, the burden of proof is on Denton to refute Darwinian assumptions, or to make point by point comparisons, on a regular basis, to show how his theory better explains the data.

Finally, although this problem plagues Denton's anthropic colleagues as well, it is not clear here what counts as "evidence." Denton has a hypothesis. Repeatedly, he speaks of "coincidences," "appearances," and how particular natural occurrences give the "impression" of design. But it is not clear how the data of the natural world are logically pieced together to form an argument that supports the conclusions he wants to draw. Rather, what seems decisive for him is simply the preponderance of facts and the great chain of interconnection within the natural world; this is what is supposed to convince the reader. Thus, one could suggest that his display of the laws of nature yields not so much an argument from design as a retrospective accounting for the way things are.

Despite these shortcomings, Denton has pulled together an intriguing array of information. Those interested in the "anthropic" debate or seeking evidence for a teleological accounting of the natural world have in Denton an energetic champion. The rest will ponder the magnificence of creation and await a more careful methodological account of how one moves from discoveries of natural phenomena to cosmic convictions. □

M. Therese Lysaught *teaches in the religious studies department at the University of Dayton.*

WELL, ALMOST NEVER

Never at War
Why Democracies Will Not Fight One Another
Spencer C. Weart
Yale University Press, $35, 432 pp.

Jean Bethke Elshtain

Spencer R. Weart, director of the Center for Physics at the American Institute of Physics, here turns historian—I *assume* he is by training a physicist—in order to breathe new life into an old claim, for some a rock-ribbed truth: Democracies don't go to war against one another. As soon as the gauntlet is thrown down, the *realpolitiker* in this reader comes back: "Oh yeah? What about postrevolutionary France going on a rampage against every European country in sight?" And the response from the defender of the Weartean thesis would likely be: "Yes, but none of the attacked countries or regimes was democratic." The point is not that democracies do not make war but, rather, "that well-established democracies are inhibited by their fundamental nature from warring on one another." Weart indicates that he could not find a single "plain counterfactual to this rule, even in remote historic locales."

Of course, this is much too tidy. In defense of his thesis, Weart divides regimes into so many categories and variants on categories you need a scoreboard to keep it all straight. He builds his case by layering on definitions and categories, defending this approach by noting that he offers an exhaustively chronicled history that puts paid to the traditional balance-of-power and *raison d'état* propositions. At the same time, he is no Kantian. He acknowledges that free peoples do not lose a hankering for conflict. "Democratic bellicosity" remains a problem.

But what sort of problem and how do democracies sort it out?A first task is to determine what modes of political and social organization fall into the category "democracy." Weart defines "re-

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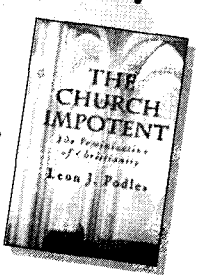

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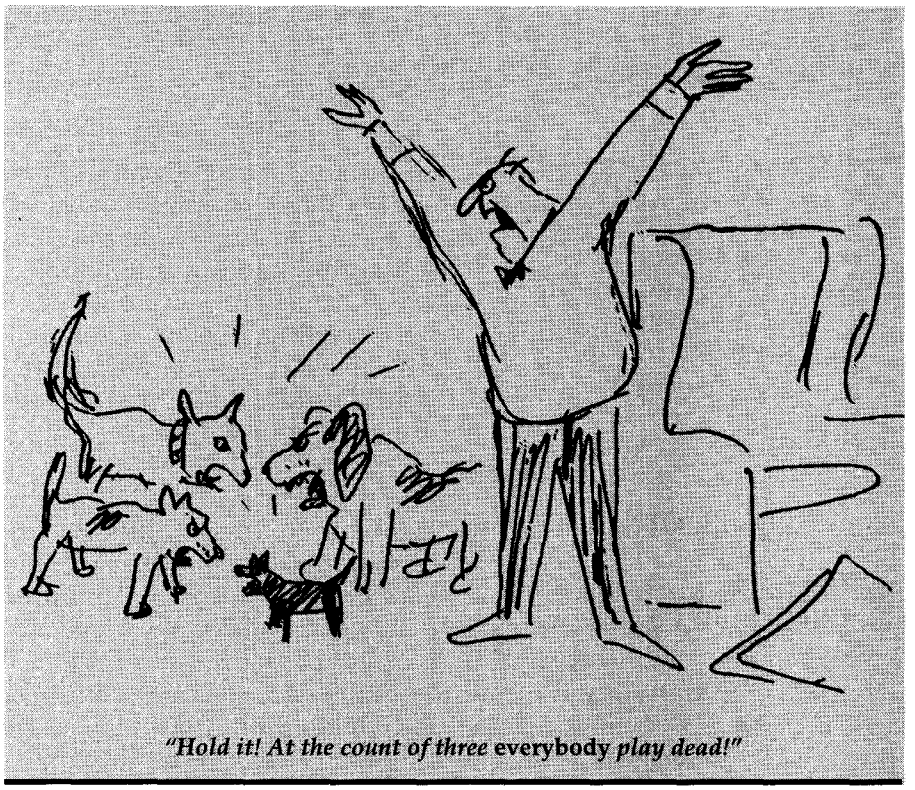

"Hold it! At the count of three **everybody** *play dead!"*

public" as a "more general concept," meaning that democracy is but one of a very long list of variants on republic. In a republic, "political decisions are made by a body of citizens who hold equal rights." A republic becomes a democracy "if the body of citizens with political rights includes at least two-thirds of the adult males," and Weart argues that even republican oligarchies rarely come into conflict. But into this category, somewhat astonishingly, he slots both the Soviet Union and the old Czechoslovakia under Soviet domination as offering one of the pitifully few exceptions to the rule that "approximately republican regimes of the same kind" never come into conflict. The exceptional occasion: the crushing of Prague Spring, 1968.

Clearly something is askew. This analysis shoves into one category an authoritarian, oppressive empire and one of its client states upon which an analogous state apparatus was forced. Weart goes on to tag the Soviet Union and the Soviet-dominated Czechoslovakia not only "republican" but "approximately" the same kind of order!

Weart's definition of war is no more enlightening. One "satisfactory definition of war is violence organized by political units against one another across their boundaries." But Weart prefers "any conflict involving at least two-hundred deaths in organized combat." This opens the door to hundreds and hundreds of conflicts and Weart covers a staggering number. But what does it all add up to? First, "well-established democracies have never made war on one another." Keep in mind here his definition of democracy as a sub-set of republic and the fact that he has appended the qualifier: well-established.

As Weart sets out to see if this first finding holds up, he finds a second. "Well-established oligarchic republics (the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia in 1968, remember) "have scarcely ever made war on one another." The posing and pursuit of caveats and clarifiers goes on for pages. But a "key hypothesis" is now added, namely, that "leaders will tend to act toward their foreign counterparts in the way they are accustomed to act toward rival domestic political leaders." Machiavellian at home; Machiavellian abroad. Moderate compromiser at home; ditto. Whatever the merits of this case—and they are considerable—it is not made effectively here.

The bulk of *Never at War* is devoted to case studies, all pointing in the direction of Weart's general claims, from ancient Greece to contemporary Yugoslav successor-state horrors. My hunch is that knowledgeable historians and social scientists will find wanting the particular ways Weart parses a "case." At times, Weart seems to be trying to keep his vessel from springing leaks and his preferred way of staving off swamping and sinking is to further refine already narrowly parsed definitions.

I've mentioned the case of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Weart's one comment on this strange coupling is that it might indeed seem "odd to give the respectable name of republicans to these overseers of an empire and prison camps." But the key question for Weart is not how cruelly the oligarchy treats its subjects, "but whether they treat one another as equals," a sort of honor-among-thieves claim. The problem with this notion is that the Soviets and Czechs were not coequal thieves. The "incident" of Prague, 1968, comes off in this book as dry as dust. A few pages describe the negotiation between Brezhnev and his henchmen and Dubcek "and his colleagues," without any sense of the popular uprising (stones against tanks in Wenceslas Square), the radical disparity of forces, the West's outrage and inaction. To Weart, the case is simply the exception that proves the rule that oligarchic republics do not attack their own kind.

The final message of the book is also its first: that well-established democracies are "inhibited by their fundamental nature from warring on one another." Weart insists that there is a sturdy and growing zone of democratic peace. That may well be true. Weart's hopes for universal democracy are worthy enough. But too much that is critical to history and human life drops out of Weart's scenario. Dauntingly complex issues are settled in a manner that is too arbitrary to be finally compelling. □

Jean Bethke Elshtain *is the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Professor of Social and Political Ethics at the University of Chicago.*

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RELIGION BOOKNOTES

Lawrence S. Cunningham

The Flowering of Mysticism is the third volume of Bernard McGinn's monumental history of Christian mysticism. The generic title of McGinn's enterprise is *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*. McGinn's approach, argued at some length in volume 1, is that mysticism is best understood as the experience of the consciousness of God's presence in a deep and immediate way. This approach permits him to bypass the sometimes sterile philosophical debates, which usually only focus on first-person accounts about the character of mystical experience. His decision to stand with this understanding has triggered some critiques in the scholarly community, but none has been so compelling as to cause him to change his position.

The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism—1200–1350
by Bernard McGinn
Crossroad Herder, $24.95, 526 pp.

The present volume treats what has been called the "new mysticism." Three characteristics are symptomatic of this largely fourteenth-century movement: a new attitude about the relationship of the cloister to the world (with a detectable shift away from the cloister); a new relationship between men and women who are on the path of mystical union; and, finally, new forms of literature, language, and modes of representing mystical consciousness. McGinn calls this the "democratization" of mysticism. The new understanding argued that anyone prompted by grace could reach mystical union without necessarily being supported by the regular life of the cloister. Such a widening of mystical opportunities was thought to reveal itself in the increased use of the vernacular, new experiments in the formation of religious communities (the Beguines), different vocabularies (the language of *Minne* in which the Dutch word for "love" gets a currency so wide that it become almost the affective equivalent of *esse*, the Latin word for being), and, inevitably, tensions with those more at home with older forms of religious expression.

McGinn begins his treatment with an extended consideration of Saint Francis of Assisi, the Franciscan tradition, and the men and women who followed that path. Command of the sources permits McGinn to set Francis into historical context. He impressively searches the writings we have from the hand of Francis in order to place them into a broader theological framework. He follows the trajectory of the lives of those men and women who use Francis as a paradigm for following the crucified Christ, including those who mix a love for Francis with the apocalyptic notions derived from Joachim of Flora. His treatment of the Franciscan movement is so thorough (as he told me when he was writing it) that he knew before this volume was complete that it would require another book to do full justice to the more apophatic tradition represented by Meister Eckhart and the Dominican school.

Subsequent chapters treat women who experimented with new forms of religious living (for example, recluses, certain forms of the beguinage, urban solitaries); the three great Beguine mystics (Hadewijch, Mechtild, and Marguerite of Porete); and, finally, the women mystics who belonged to traditional religious orders (such as the great tradition of the monastery of Helfta). Space does not permit even a résumé of the careful elaborations McGinn makes of the texts attributed to these women, the men who wrote about them, and the scholarship devoted to them (there are nearly one hundred and fifty pages of notes in this volume). It is worthwhile pointing out the careful distinctions he draws between visionary and mystical literature; the porous border between "low" devotionalism and "high" theology; the reason(s) why there is such an emphasis on suffering in these writings; the interaction between holy women and their male counterpoints; and, finally, the novelty of some of their religious formulations. In the case of Marguerite of Porete, such innovation ended with her on an inquisitor's pyre. Having taught a seminar on trinitarian theology this past term, I was struck by the creative trinitarian motifs found in much of this literature. Those whose primary interests are not historical will still find much to nourish the mind by a careful reading of these pages.

In a postscript, McGinn notes that few of these figures have been conspicuous in the standard accounts of church history. Nonetheless, he observes, the task of historical theology is not only to reread the classics of a Francis of Assisi or a Gertrude of Helfta, but to reclaim and remember those who have been forgotten. Some elements of the lives of the persons treated in this volume may seem odd or bizarre, but even such eccentricities are put into context in a sympathetic study like this one. One can only hope that the author's energies do not flag before he brings his whole work to conclusion. In my estimation, the three extant volumes already constitute a major work of historical theological scholarship.

Over the last few decades, scholarship on mystics and mysticism has expanded beyond the Western world, and a number of studies of the writings of religious women in Latin America in the period after the Reformation have also been published. The Mexican polymath, Sor Juana de la Cruz, has been the subject of a number of studies, including a brilliant work by the late Octavio Paz. Judging from the bibliography in McKnight's work, there is a

The Mystic of Tunja: The Writings of Madre Castillo, 1671–1742
by Kathryn Joy McKnight
University of Massachusetts Press, $45, 284 pp.

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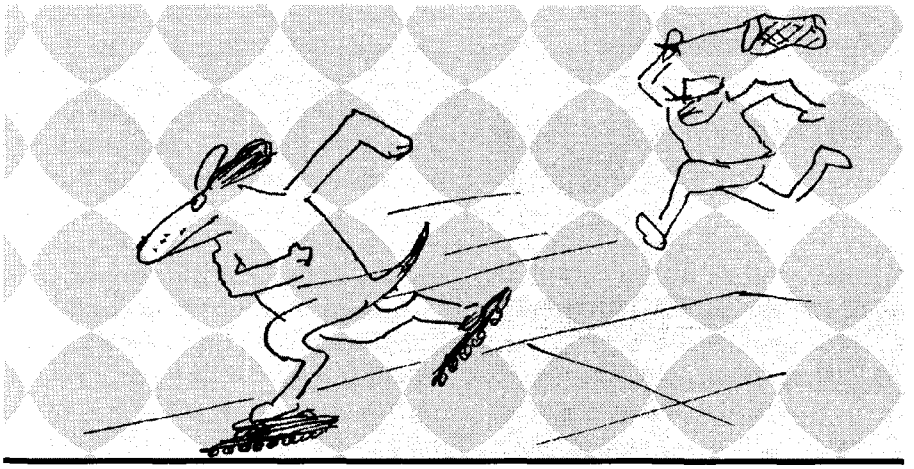

whole range of such literature to be studied. The recovery of this corpus, of course, is due in part to the burgeoning interest in the story of women in the church.

Madre Castillo was a Colombian nun who spent more than fifty years in the convent of the Poor Clares in the provincial town of Tunja. She left behind a small body of writing that consisted of her spiritual autobiography (*Vida*), a collection of spiritual maxims, reflections, meditations (*Afectos espirituales*), and a small notebook with some poems and earlier maxims reworked into a somewhat more refined form (*Cuaderno de Inciso*—so named because she wrote in the blank pages of an accounting book). As McKnight argues, Madre Castillo was profoundly shaped by what was available to enclosed nuns of the time: the breviary, some of the writings of John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, the Ignatian spiritual exercises, Osuna's *Spiritual Alphabet*, and some standard collections of hagiography.

McKnight obviously did a lot of archival work in her research (was this originally a dissertation?) and pages in this volume were (for this nonexpert) quite instructive. She has a good analysis of the autobiographies produced (usually for confessors or spiritual directors) by religious women who followed the example of Teresa of Avila's autobiography. The author is also good in tracing out the space allotted to religious women to exercise their desire to write. I was also much instructed in the scholarship being produced on this new source of spiritual literature.

Each of the writings of Madre Castillo is given extended analysis in the second half of the book. The first half (marred here and there by the heavy sludge of postmodern literary palaver) discusses the place of Madre Castillo in literary history (she is evidently well known and highly regarded in Colombia) and provides some social context for studying her life. Life in the convent seems to have been punctuated by Castillo's need to deal with complex financial dealings (she was abbess more than once), convent squabbles over the interminable issue of laxity versus observance, and the other predictable breaks in the routine of the regular life.

Castillo's writings are only cited or paraphrased, so we can't tell if her interpreter gets it right. But one thing is clear. However much the author knows about colonial literature (a lot, evidently), feminist literary theory, and the culture of the time, she is woefully undernourished when it comes to handling theological questions. Her use of terms like mental prayer, mystical theology, visions, locutions, and the entire vocabulary of mystical and ascetical theology leaves much to be desired. Reading McGinn would surely have helped. The three stages of the spiritual life are not "early modern," Erasmus did not "redefine" theology as the study of Scripture (Aquinas and his contemporaries did that), and the division of memory, understanding, and will was not "neoscholastic" (the distinction goes back at least to the time of Augustine). I could go on. In other words, what one learns from this work (and I admit to having learned a good deal) one learns despite the patina of opaque critical jargon and the tin ear for religious discourse. In the most irritating paragraph in the book, the criticisms of a Colombian nun who wrote a biography of Madre Castillo are dismissed because McKnight's work deals with "social and economic determinisms" in a more integrated fashion. God help the man who would patronize a woman religious and scholar in that kind of tone.

In *The Cloister Walk*, Kathleen Norris says that it was the liturgy that pulled her back to the practice of faith. Doris Grumbach, by contrast, charts a spiritual journey in which she gives up on liturgy and other "church" practices for a life of solitary prayer. Grumbach, a celebrated essayist and critic, is under no illusion about how the Christian contemplative tradition warns against such solitary spirituality. Indeed, in more than one place she quotes everyone from her daughter (who is a seminary president) to the spiritual authors she is reading, as they attempt to dissuade her from this lonely path. Grumbach, however, remains steadfast. Her many years of church attendance and sacramental practice have not continued to nourish her. As a consequence, amid extreme pain (from neuralgia) and from the perspective of old age, she sets a course of prayer relying on some spiritual guidance from favorite authors (Simone Weil, Thomas Merton, Meister Eckhart, Kathleen Norris among others) and from the traditional source of all Christian prayer: the psalms.

The Presence of Absence: On Prayers and an Epiphany
by Doris Grumbach
Beacon, $18, 126 pp.

Grumbach prays because she is a woman of deep faith and, further, because in her younger days she had an overpowering experience of God's presence which anchored her in faith and which she would love to re-experience. *The Presence of Absence* is an account of her years of prayer, reading, and struggle with pain and with what the old au-

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thors would call desolation. Her experiences are set out in graceful prose and with compelling honesty. Like all spiritual persons, Grumbach struggles both with God's absence and with the authors she encounters. The end result is a book that would inspire any person of faith.

The professor in me desperately wanted to debate all this with Grumbach. Do not take seriously Merton's *Seeds of Contemplation* (1949). Merton himself regarded it as such a naive book that he completely rewrote it in 1960–61 under the title *New Seeds of Contemplation*. Don't think of the *Cloud of Unknowing* as the work of a solitary person of prayer; he was a Carthusian monk whose ordinary liturgical practices were the context out of which his contemplative prayer arose (the same thing goes for writers like John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila). Don't think of the church as an institution; think of people within the church (like those with whom you correspond) as part of a community of prayer.

Despite such cautions, one must thank Grumbach for penning an authentic work. Anyone who despairs of the church but still clings to prayer will benefit from this woman's struggles and insights. Despite my dissatisfactions with some of what Grumbach has to say, my new resolution is to go back and read her earlier works such as *Life in a Day* and *Fifty Days of Solitude*. I have known of her writings mainly from her reviews and articles in magazines like the *New Republic* and this journal, but this recent book makes me wish for a more sustained encounter with this person of faith.

Seeking Peace: Notes and Conversations along the Way
by Johann Christoph Arnold
Plough, $20, 248 pp.

Johann Arnold is a well-known spiritual writer and peacemaker who belongs to the Anabaptist-inspired Bruderhof (whose life and origins are fully described in the final pages of this book). The Bruderhof are Christian communities who practice the sharing of goods, a life of simplicity, and a dedication to peacemaking. Anyone who thinks that pacifism is a synonym for passivity would do well to look at a manifesto of Arnold's father, written a generation ago and partially cited here. Each sentence begins with the phrase "We declare war against...cruelty to children, the search for power over the souls of people, the spirit of unforgiveness, envy," and so on.

The book, dedicated to an understanding of Christian peace, is divided into five large sections: Seeking peace, meanings of peace, the paradoxes of peace, stepping stones to peace, and the abundant life of peace. Under those rubrics, Arnold composes brief chapters that often take the form of meditations. He draws on a wide literature, with citations from everyone from Tagore to Merton. My favorite line is one he borrows from Karl Barth, who once wrote that to clasp one's hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising

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against the disorder of the world.

Seeking Peace is not a systematic treatise. It is more fashioned like a book of meditations, even though it has a systematic structure which points to the section on the "abundant life." A good way to approach this work might be to read it in small doses. A quick reading runs the risk of thinking that the straightforward prose style indicates a "simple" book.

One of the paradoxes represented by the book is this: traditionally some strands of the Anabaptist tradition (like the Old Order Amish) shunned the outside world. Others, such as the Bruderhof, stand against the world by their communitarian style of life and are deeply concerned with advancing the peace of Christ among those who do not accept either their lifestyle or their faith. They work with death-row prisoners, struggle against abortion, and keep open lines to all seekers of peace. As Arnold writes, even though they would love for everyone to know Jesus Christ, "Jesus is a person, not a concept or an article of theology, and his truth embraces far more than our limited minds can comprehend."

Arnold's book is inspirational in the best sense of the word. It would make a superb companion for a retreat or as a chair-side book for daily reading. □

Lawrence S. Cunningham *teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

In fact, that's what has changed since the good old days. There are now tests galore. This latest round of testing madness has been picking up steam for more than twenty years, just at a time when McCarthy has been noticing that our schools are in decline. But I wouldn't argue that there's a cause and effect here, just that there is no evidence that more tests are a way to cure whatever ails us.

In the only consistent standardized scores that we have, the kids are doing just as well/badly as they ever did. We're among the top nations in the world when it comes to literacy, for example. But beating up on public enterprises is sufficiently easy to do these days that no one need worry if the data do not add up.

Our schools have never done the kind of job any fair-minded democracy should want them to do—truly enlarge the minds and hearts of our youth. Wouldn't it be lovely if that's what was worrying us. But longing for a nonexistent past won't bring us to such a future. Uniforms, retention, tests, prayer—even smaller classes—are stand-ins for nonexistent thinking about what it is that really ails us and what is it that schools might do about it. Only thoughtful schools, powerful schools, and schools where adults, not mindless tests, are in charge might fit our citizens to exercise wiser judgment. It's learning to use good judgment and taking responsibility for one's ideas and one's practices that lie at the heart of being a well-educated citizen. But first we need a citizenry—and a media—that is willing to engage in that much harder discussion of purposes, and prepared to settle for something more complicated than sound bites.

I recommend to you a book by Richard Rothstein, titled *The Way We Were?* (Century Foundation, 1998). It reminds us that nonsense said often enough almost sounds like common sense.

DEBORAH MEIER
Boston, Mass.

The author replies:

Deborah Meier's objection to my column is so wide-ranging that I can only respond to a few points. It was, of course, not my intent to indulge in "beating up on public enterprises," but simply to report on the nationwide concern about the schools demonstrated in the last election and the efforts at improvement being made in several states.

On the standardized tests as a tool of improvement, our memories and information differ. Meier says "no state in the whole union used to require a test to graduate." When I was in high school, we prepared earnestly for the tests called the Minnesota State Boards, and contemporaries of mine recall vividly the rigors of the New York Regents' exams. Then—more than fifty years ago—both teachers and students thought the tests significant.

As to Meier's assertion that there is no evidence that tests help, it would seem to be at odds with the report issued February 10 by the U.S. Department of Education on the nationally mandated reading exams given to a sample of about 31,000 public- and private-school students. According to the report, the scores in reading skills showed improvement for the fourth, eighth, and twelfth-graders tested. "These are encouraging signs that we are beginning to move in the right direction," said Vice-President Al Gore in announcing the results.

We can all agree that Meier's large vision for "thoughtful" and "powerful" schools in the future is an ideal. Perhaps concerned parents and teachers working at improvement will bring it about.

ABIGAIL MCCARTHY

Collective guilt

I had several contrary reactions to Amitai Etzioni's otherwise excellent essay ["Kristallnacht Remembered," February, 12]. First, the notion of "collective guilt"—or "communal responsibility"—remains, for me, a very tricky and troublesome concept. Etzioni cites several examples of public events in which the good citizen ought to be informed and involved. I could not help thinking about another example: the Middle East, long a place of ethnic hatred and violence. Newspaper accounts of "collective guilt" as practiced by the Israeli government have included demolishing the homes of terrorists (or suspected terrorists), thereby leaving entire families homeless. This does not seem to be a fair, or just, or moral, or human act.

Granted, we all should strive to learn the lessons of the past so as not to repeat them. However, I am concerned about the potential connection between remembering and resenting,

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or "resentiment" defined by one writer as "the deliberate re-experiencing of an unpleasant experience in order to re-enforce it." Similarly, I wonder about the relationship between forgiving and forgetting. Perhaps only by ultimately practicing an ethic of forgiveness can different people live with each other in a community of equal human beings.

TONY DISTEFANO
Alexandria, Va.

One, true church

As an Orthodox layman, I would like to respond to Jerry Ryan's "Back to the Future" [January 15]. I will not comment on the historical issues pertaining to the papacy, nor the appreciation or lack of appreciation for that institution by the Orthodox church over the centuries. It seems to me, however, that one thing Catholics do not seem to understand is that we Orthodox, at this point in time, do not perceive a need for the papal office.

Right now, the Roman church appears to be beleaguered on many sides by what I would call liturgical and theological civil war, if not anarchy. We Orthodox do not seem to be visited by these demons. We have our own problems, of course, particularly in the West, but theologically and ecclesiologically we are all of one mind. No arguments about the Creed, nor the mysteries (sacraments) of the church, what they mean, who may receive them, etc. No argument about the meaning of Scripture for the church, nor about whether Christ actually was born of a virgin, or if he rose from the dead. We appear to have survived the past millennium unscathed by the horrible battles and viruses afflicting the West during this period of history. And that without a pope to set the standards for belief and praxis.

I agree that Christian disunity is a scandal, but most of the problems of schism in the West appear to have begun around the time that the papal claims for universal jurisdiction and final appeal began to be inflated. So the problem of disunity is largely a Western phenomenon. (I agree that we have our Nestorians and Monophysites, but they are closer to Orthodoxy than most Protestants are to Rome.)

While well intentioned, Ryan's suggestions would fall on deaf ears in the Orthodox world, I fear, since we already have that unity of faith that Rome is seeking to promulgate. I pray that unity may one day come. However, it might mean for us that the Catholic church of the West would have to recover the attitude of the first Gregory, whom we all honor as a saint.

JAMES MORGAN
Olympia, Wash.

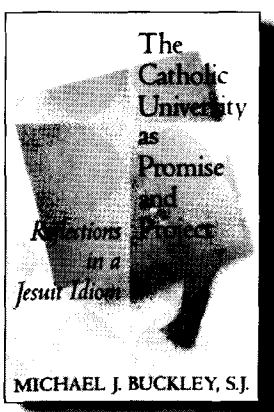
Van Beeck's intuitions

Your recent contemporary theology issue [January 29], with its confusing counterpoint of articles on women by Frans Jozef van Beeck and Rose Hoover, hardly qualifies you as a credible medium of serious theological discussion.

On the one hand, you present Hoover's well-reasoned argument that showed teeth by its theologically acute awareness of the diverse meanings of tradition and its corresponding freedom from invective against the past—qualities I find too frequently absent from self-consciously feminist writings on the subject. Here, one thought in reading, is a substantive, focused, and objective argument demanding serious attention.

But this is countered by the somewhat rambling musings of van Beeck, which shift back and forth—as evident in the very title of the piece—between two essentially unrelated subjects: "The Women in My Life" and "An Intuition about the Celibate Male Priesthood." To make matters worse, van Beeck begins by disclaiming any concern with arguing the pros and cons of women's ordination, although his "intutition" proves to be related precisely, and really only, to that subject.

Furthermore, there is the unacceptable application of the intuition itself. To argue that the church's restriction



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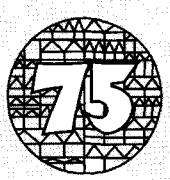
of priesthood to men may be based on the "provisionality" of the sacramental order, so that "the sacrament of orders is [sexually] lopsided precisely because it is a sacrament" is to subject the "already" dimension of the sacraments to their "not yet" dimension so as to deprive them of the possibility of any stable meaning. It is precisely this required stability that is captured in the principle, correctly stated, if incorrectly interpreted, by *Inter insigniores*, that the sacraments are based on natural signs, that is, on natural realities. These are "presupposed and perfected but not destroyed" by the word of faith that constitutes the form of the sacraments, and point unambiguously to the grace reality bestowed by the sacrament, for example, water as a sign of spiritual cleansing and rebirth in baptism, bread and wine as a sign of spiritual food in the Eucharist, etc. Without this abiding natural significance, grace would have no fixed reference point in nature and hence would be at the mercy of human vagary. What van Beeck's "intuition" really points to, it seems to me, is the imbalance that is rooted not in fallen nature, as often seems to be implied, but in "natural history," that is the long-term historical development of the human race as a whole. And if this be true, then van Beeck's intuition advances rather than detracts from Hoover's reasoning.

DENNIS FERRARA
Washington, D.C.



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SPREAD THE TABLE

Bill Broderick

More than three years ago, in courageous defiance of Vatican guidelines, our diocese decreed that girls would not be allowed to serve at the altar. The diocesan vocations director observed that altar boys are a fruitful source of vocations to the priesthood and "a two-thousand-year-old tradition" in the church.

This set me to wondering who might have been the altar boys for Saint Peter. Perhaps his own children or grandchildren? Then I began to reflect on my own experience as an altar boy in the 1930s. It began in the fourth grade when six of us were chosen to be trained as servers.

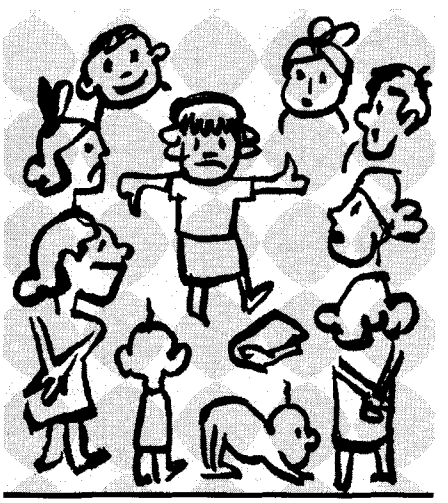
Our first stage was to memorize the Latin responses. Our instructor was Sister Mary Geralda, a young, vivacious nun, with whom we all fell in love. To relieve the monotony of committing the Latin prayers to memory, some of us would begin to recite them in exaggerated sing-song fashion. The response that most lent itself to this technique was the *Suscipiat* (in English, "May the Lord accept...."). The English conclusion—"for our good and the good of all his church"—lacks the lyrical and rhythmic roll of *"ad utilitatem quoque nostram totiusque ecclesiae suae sanctae."*

In those days, Mass began with the "prayers at the foot of the altar," the longest of which was the *Confiteor*, or "I Confess." It was a lot longer in Latin because we confessed to a lot more saints than we do now—to Mary, John the Baptist, Peter and Paul, Michael the Archangel, and then to all the saints—and finally, as we entered the home stretch following the *"mea maxima culpa,"* we besought the same saintly crowd again to pray for us sinners.

As you can imagine, this was pretty challenging stuff for fourth graders. And there was an even bigger challenge once we began serving, for in those days no priest ever said the *Confiteor* slowly (let alone reverently). Some were world-class in speed, and we took up the challenge, mangling the prayer, which of course, we were saying on behalf of the whole congregation. God, being omniscient, no doubt understood us and, being merciful, forgave us.

Sister Geralda also taught us the timing of the various moves required by the rubrics: when to transfer the missal from one side of the altar to the other, when to bow to the priest, when to genuflect, and when and how to ring the bells.

Our pastor was Father Halfpenny, an elderly gentleman who quietly gave financial help to many parishioners hit by the Depression. We altar boys shared in the general belief in his saintliness, for each Saturday he would give the week's four servers a dollar to divide. He also had a cousin who owned the Detroit Tigers, and periodically we got passes to Tigers games. In that era, all games were in the afternoon, so we got out of school early. And we got out not only for ball games. Following funerals, the priest would often take the altar boys with him to the cemetery for the burial ceremonies, giving us a nice break from diagramming sentences.



Another diversion from school was to travel by city bus to pick up a supply of unconsecrated eucharistic hosts. These were collected from a rather formidable-looking establishment known as the House of the Good Shepherd. We learned later that making the hosts wasn't the primary function of this institution, which was referred to as a home for wayward girls. That, of course, was of less interest to us than missing a half-day of school.

Normally, we had our servers' assignments a week in advance. Occasionally, however, my brother and I would get a phone call to come in the following morning for a 6 A.M. wedding Mass. It seemed to me to be a curious time to get married, and only later did I learn the reason for those dawn-patrol nuptuals.

By the time I reached thirteen years of age, I was a veteran server and helped teach the newcomers how to comport themselves on the altar. That year pretty much ended my altar-boy career, except for an occasional opportunity in high school and again as a soldier in Italy. It was, in actuality and in retrospect, an enriching and faith-strengthening experience.

It did not, however, in my case or in any of my boyhood compatriots, result in a call to the priesthood. No doubt, in some cases being an altar boy did contribute to decisions to enter the seminary. But there, in the eye of our diocesan vocations director, is the rub. For if girls are permitted to be altar servers, some of them, too, might find they have a vocation to the priesthood. And then where would we be? □

Bill Broderick *lives in Arlington, Virginia.*

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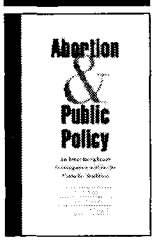

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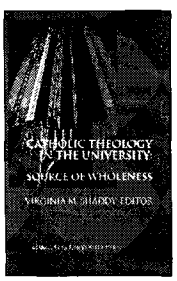

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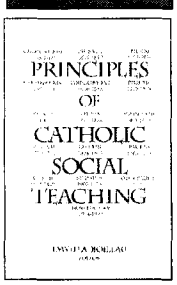

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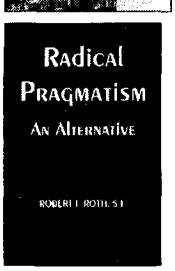

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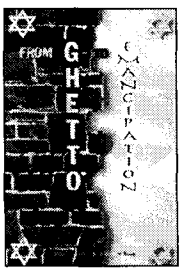

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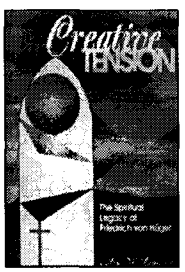

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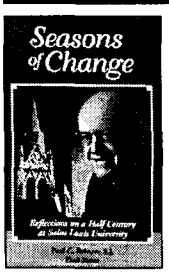

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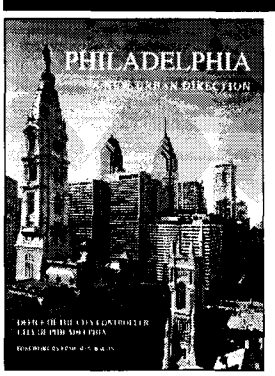

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